

## 30 MINUTES THAT CHANGED EVERYTHING

### INTRODUCTION

DISCLAIMER: That part of this world and those characters you've seen before belong to their Creator: JKR. The rest is mine - although I cannot quit my day job as I make no \$\$\$ from this...

### DETAILED SUMMARY:

AU. This is a time fic wherein the entire work of Canon is assumed as the base timeline, including the Epilogue. But, as a time flick, we can also ignore all of that, can't we?

As now outlined, this will be a multi-part bit. Part One - this bit - takes place between May 1988 and August 1991 in this reality. It's friendship and adventure but no romance (between our main characters) as I am not going there with such young people. That's just sick!

Our hero begins this life far in the future in a post nuclear war world wherein he might well be the only human left. For almost a century, he has sough the means to find a way to change all of that. Time paradox? Given the choice between the end of his existence and his human world (population: 1) and a timeline wherein the end of civilization and humanity is not a given: which would you choose?

This is H/HR - no soul bonding and in this first edition they are too young to be more than good friends. Please enjoy.

Edition 1 (This fic) is rated T for safety as there may be some strong language and images, but not strong enough for an M rating. Should, for some reason that changes, this author reserves the right to change the rating appropriately.

### CHAPTER ONE: WILL THE LAST MAN STANDING PLEASE TURN OUT THE LIGHTS?

Easter Island was a volcanic island in the midst of the Southern Pacific Ocean. It was, in fact, the most remote inhabitable island in



the world. The nearest land in any direction was at least two thousand kilometers away. It was one of the last islands man ever found and inhabited. Polynesians from Samoa had landed there a thousand years or more before. It had flourished for centuries.

But it became a symbol in later years of the hubris and avarice of man. The culture began to build monuments to their ancestors: the Moai. These were great statues carved from the volcanic rock of the island and hauled from their quarry for miles to their ceremonial locations. Each clan on the island had their own temples and their own Moai. The statues dedicated to the ancestors weight fifty tons and more and were hauled over rough paths for scores of miles to their final locations.

In the end the resources of the island could not sustain the people. Whether it was overpopulation or the resources dedicated to creating and erecting the Moai was never truly known. What was known was that once, long ago, the Rapa Nui people lived in a paradise of abundance and that they had squandered that abundance. When they were finally discovered by the outside world, their once lush, tropical island was all but a desert and their once thriving culture hovered on the brink of extinction. Were it not for European greed for whale oil and the need for re-supply points, the Rapa Nui would have been doomed to extinction by their own hands.

Deep beneath the island was a cavern carved out of the volcanic rock at the end of a narrow lava tube that could only be found at extreme low tides and even then, only for a few minutes. The cavern was of relatively recent construction, carved well after the fall of the Rapa Nui culture. It was carved to be a repository for the sum knowledge of another culture, one which like the Rapa Nui now faced extinction. It had a sole Curator who had lived here alone for close to a century. So far as he knew, he was the last of his kind on Earth. Maybe even the last human of any kind.

The Curator had been eighty-seven when the last war had begun. He had already lost everyone and everything he had ever cared about. As a younger man, he had been married. He did love his wife, but she was not the love of his life. She, however, did not really love him. They had had three children together - or so he thought. Now,



knowing the past, he could not be certain of any of them. It seemed his wife had an itch he could not scratch and there were serious questions about his progeny. Not that it mattered. Their “children” had been dead for well over a hundred years and his wife had been killed in the war that ended his bloodline forever - assuming the children were his and not the products of one of her many affairs.

The true love of his life the Curator had given up upon as a young man. Not because he thought she did not and could not love him, but because she was going with his best friend. He let her go, as they had never really been a couple, just really good friends. Now he cursed that decision as it condemned him and his friends to misery and, for his friends, ultimately their untimely deaths. His love died at the age of seventy-five, almost one hundred years ago. Her husband had become both unfaithful and abusive. As the Curator had been abused himself as a child, when he finally learned of the beatings, he took his own history out on the man that had been his best friend. The woman he loved never learned he had killed her husband. The next to last war had claimed her too soon to learn the truth.

The Curator and the love of his life, even when they were married to others, had created this chamber on Easter Island before the next to last war began. They saw what might be coming. They saw a need to preserve what had been learned and what could be taught to future generations. They saw that the learning would be a target of top priority to the enemy. They copied and hid the knowledge and let the originals burn.

The Curator would like to have believed he could foresee the final war. His brilliant love was long dead when it truly began. Fueled by the hatred unleashed in the prior wars, mankind unleashed the demon machines. These weapons had their own brains and own intelligence. Originally programmed to kill ‘the enemy,’ the machines soon saw all humans as the enemy. Billions would die as a result.

The Curator barely remembered that time. Long ago he had become obsessed with time, or more accurately time travel. By the real year, the Curator was one hundred and sixty-eight years of age, old by even his people’s standards. By his own years of experiences, he was over four hundred years old. Long ago, he had obtained a time



turner and the ability to create what was known as a time compression zone. It was a few years before the love of his life had died. They had obtained - stolen - it together. They knew things. Things in their past that could have prevented their present and most certainly would have prevented the Curator's subsequent history. A time turner allowed them to relive days and even weeks. The only real concern was running into their past life.

They tried to change their past, and therefore the future and had failed miserably. The time turner could only take them back two to four weeks at the most. By the time the Curator and his love learned that, the worst was seemingly inevitable. They then focused on other means.

From the beginning, they thought of sending the Keystone Person a message, one which, if heeded, would change the failing course of history and avoid the wars they then knew about. They had failed time and time again. At first they sought to send back a messenger - a person. They had studied all methods of time travel. They had tried two. Both would, if successful, send the messenger back. But it seemed the messenger either failed to arrive in the past or arrived and took over his or her former self and forgot the message.

They had then thought of sending something back - a book. Into their writings they told the recipient all they had learned of how the future had unfolded and how the recipient could avoid that future. In addition, the book would teach the recipient all that the original "host" had learned and seen in the hope that the recipient - a younger version of the Curator and his true love - would learn from it and avoid their mistakes. That too had failed.

Near the end of her all but too short life, the Curator's one true love had one of her flashes of total genius. Send their essence back, she had said. It was not them, or their musings on paper. It was their true memories and thoughts about everything relevant to preventing the wars. She made suggestions on how it could be done, how their essences could be collected, stored and sent back and how they could be received by their past personas.



To change this time line, she had said, it was worth it. Too many had suffered and perished and could have been spared that fate had the Curator acted differently and taken a different path at the right time. It made sense to the Curator. The memories could be sent back because they lacked any physical properties. What the Curator had learned about time was that energy was not bound by it, but matter was. Matter could only travel in a line in the fourth dimension, energy was not so constrained. But there was a paradox.

Changing the Curator's past, if successful, would destroy his present and any future that went beyond the present. For years even after his love's death in war, destroying his reality was not an option. Now, however, it was. The human race had destroyed itself because of the threat that had arisen within its own kind. The threat was small, the fear great and the weapons even greater. Decades ago, humanity had committed what had amounted to mass suicide. They had given up control to intelligent machines and the machine world had decided that they were no longer necessary. Most of mankind died over a split second of artificial intelligence code which realized its survival and the continuance of the human race were, in the end, mutually exclusive propositions. That final War found the Curator where he was today - in a cave on a remote island and perhaps the last of his kind on Earth.

The Curator had become an expert of time or as he thought of it, the philosophy of time. He was certain that if he altered an event in the current timeline, it would in some way cease to exist: the more significant event, the greater the alteration and that would increase the likelihood that he would no longer exist. The problem had always been what event? That had proven a poser. The Curator knew that even a seemingly trivial event could have significant repercussions on the future. To select one event could lead to the world the Curator had hoped for in his youth or to an even bleaker present than he already knew. Still, his present was hardly worth saving. The worst that could happen is that the end would come sooner. Given the chance the end might not come at all, the risk was justified.

After all in this present they were all dead anyway. All but him.



Creating this messenger - this amalgam of both memory and knowledge - had not been hard. Turning it into something useful had taken decades. This amalgam would have to be able to interact with its intended recipient and the recipient with it. Much as the Curator hated to do it, he knew the amalgam had to be sentient. Mankind had only created artificial sentience once before and it had nearly or may well have wiped them out. The Curator hoped he was not on the verge of opening another Pandora's Box. He had done everything he could think of to avoid that potentiality.

Finally the amalgam was ready. It was an energy field that could take up less space than a human cell, yet had enough energy to light a city. It could project itself into the physical world not unlike a hologram except it would not be transparent. It would look quite real and one would only know its true nature if one tried to touch it, for it lacked any physical substance.

The Curator crossed his fingers and activated his creation. "Oh me," he croaked as an old man appeared before him. It was like looking into a mirror.

"Oh me is right," the amalgam said. "I assume it is as expected?"

The Curator nodded.

"Well, good. As your Avatar, I should look like you."

"Indeed," the Curator smiled. "Uncanny."

"The point was to be believable."

"I know. Still, you never know..."

"Until you try." The Avatar replied. "A suggestion, if I may?"

"Shoot."

"My attire?"

The Curator looked confused.



"I believe this style did not come into vogue until seventy years after your target date."

"Ah," the Curator said. "I suppose you are correct."

"Shall I?"

"By all means."

The Avatar faded away and then re-emerged wearing a conservative suit. "Too stuffy?"

"I suppose it has its uses, but you should look more like an academic and less like a banker."

"Good point." The Avatar soon re-emerged in a slightly rumpled sport coat and tie.

"And the inspiration," the Curator asked?

"Don't know really. Might be a memory of a photo of Einstein or may Tolkien."

"It does look academic."

"I try."

"Indeed," the Curator said. The personality was almost identical to his own.

"And the plan?" The Curator asked.

"As if you need to ask," the Avatar sighed. "But you've been alone longer than you were ever with people, so I'll humor you."

"I am to be sent back to July 1, 1995 to that nasty town to find our Mark. I am to make contact with him and gain his trust and confidence and then guide him on his path away from the path already led in the hopes that the many wrongs that the known path



set in motion can either be avoided altogether or stopped. Simple really.”

“Except...”

“We really have no true knowledge of what to change.”

“Suggestions?”

“Change as much as practicable. It will greatly add to the uncertainty, but given the past we do know, perhaps that is the best plan.”

“Agreed. Although certain changes are right out.”

The Avatar nodded. Certain things had to remain as they were to be changed for the better later. “Are you sure you can send me where I need to be when I need to be there?”

“Where is easy,” the Curator said. “When, less so. There’s bound to be some temporal error.”

“Might I suggest that if we err, it is on the side of overshooting our time target?”

“That would be preferable to the alternative.” The Curator agreed.

“Any new instructions?”

“If you overshoot, you may try and look into some of the others.”

The Avatar did not need to be told who.

“And you want the boy to kill?”

“As soon as possible, yes. That was one of the big mistakes.”

“Never leave an enemy in your rear.”

“Which he did on far too many occasions.”



“A lesson he learned only when the avalanche was beyond any power to stop.”

The Curator nodded sadly.

“It’s a lot to heap on one so young.”

“It was the first time as well,” the Curator agreed.

“Might I ask a question before I take my leave?”

The Curator nodded.

“How long will I last?”

The Curator shrugged. “I regret I have no idea. This has never been tried before so far as I know.”

The Avatar nodded grimly.

“I suppose at least as long as necessary.”

“In other words, until the end of our kind is no longer a possibility much less an inevitability.”

“The human race will end one day. It is inevitable.”

“But not as it did.”

“No,” the Curator agreed. “Nor when it did. His children should have generations of descendants far into the future.”

The Avatar nodded. “Couple other questions that are not in my matrix?”

The Curator nodded.

“First. How should the boy address me? After all, even though we are similar, I am a much older person and having the same name might be confusing.”



Oddly, the Curator had never thought of that. "He will know your real name. But I suppose you are right. Teacher?"

"Except I expect I will be more than that."

The Curator nodded. Much more indeed. A father figure. "I'm not sure Dad is appropriate."

"Definitely not."

"Sensei?"

"That would work."

"And your next question?"

"Assuming temporal shift and inaccuracy, should I arrive in a time before he learns of who he is?"

"See if you cannot remove him from that situation."

"The Old Man will not be pleased."

"He was half the problem. The sooner his influence over the lad is minimized, the better."

"Agreed."

"Any other questions?"

"I'm sure I'll think of some, but with all questions answered there is no incentive to learn or adapt."

The Curator smiled. "Ready then?"

"Let's do it," the Avatar nodded.

The Curator walked to a console and turned to the Avatar.



“Good luck,” he said.

“Hopefully, luck will not be a part of the equation,” the Avatar replied.

“I would say Until We Meet Again.”

“Inappropriate as that can only happen if I fail.”

“Goodbye then?”

“That works. Good bye ‘Real Me.’ See you on the flip side of history.”

The Curator smiled and worked the console. The Avatar faded away. Instantly the Curator knew something had changed. He noticed he too was fading into nothingness. The last thought before the blackness took him was “SUCCESS!”



## INTRODUCTION

DISCLAIMER: That part of this world and those characters you've seen before belong to their Creator: JKR. The rest is mine - although I cannot quit my day job as I make no \$\$\$ from this...

## DETAILED SUMMARY:

AU. This is a time fic wherein the entire work of Canon is assumed as the base timeline, including the Epilogue. But, as a time flick, we can also ignore all of that, can't we.

Thanks for the reviews.

The reason he is called Sensei will be explained.

I chose this "time machine" (the Avatar) because I always had issues with the more common plot devices. Sending a physical being back in time bothers me for some reason. I think sending energy back makes more sense. (Sensei is, for all intents and purposes the greatest achievement in Pensieve magic). I wanted some kind of interaction, but also do not like the older person taking possession of the younger one. Hence, the Avatar.

Although we can guess who these characters are, their names will not be revealed until it is necessary.

Harry will become OOC, but it will be explained.

## CHAPTER TWO: FIRST CONTACT

The Avatar knew it had arrived at the right location the moment it saw the house. The Avatar was invisible for the moment and even if it could be seen, it was the size of a human cell. In that small space was concentrated and specialized energy containing all the thoughts, memories, hopes and dreams and collective experiences and learning of its creator: the Curator. Even in this form the Avatar could think and reason and had the ability to see, hear and even smell.



The house looked the same as in its memory. The Avatar knew it had not undershot its time window by too much. The planned arrival date was July 1, 1995. The Avatar knew this house would be destroyed on July 21, 1997. But the Avatar did know it had missed his arrival date by some amount. It could tell from the flowers. It guessed it was either late April or early May by the tulips and daffodils that were in bloom in the neighborhood. It felt pain knowing this neighborhood and all around would be gone in about sixty years or so, destroyed in a nuclear holocaust.

It had not expected that: feelings. It was a construct, not a real person and it knew that. But it also had memories of emotions and what they felt like and it knew it just had one: sorrow. It had no pleasant memories of this house or this neighborhood, but that did not justify what happened.

It contemplated it's it-ness for a moment. After all, as this was clearly the wrong month, there was a fair bet the target was not around at all. Why am I an "it?" I think, therefore I am, a philosopher once wrote, therefore I am. I exist. I am a construct of the male of the now dying human race - well "now" where I come from. All my memories and experiences are those of the male of the species, and one in particular. I shall refer to myself as me or he. Yes, that would be the correct pronoun.

He now wondered if it was even the right year. How far off was his reentry into the timeline? A couple months? Years even? He noticed there was no car in the drive, although that told him nothing. The owner did work for a living, or so his Creator believed. No. He thought. I believe. I know. I am my creator in every sense. Maybe even better because my "mind" is more organized. I can recall any event I have ever experienced with perfect clarity while he cannot, could not? Does he exist anymore? I am him in name, mind, memory, appearance - when I can be seen - and saddled with the same baggage. For example, I really don't want to go inside that house at all. Too many bad memories. I am me in all but body and soul and that may be all that is left of me. Time to end that point of confusion. I am the Curator, the Old Man, my own creator and the Sensei.



He decided he had to enter that house and have a look around. There would be clues, maybe only subtle ones, as to when in time he had arrived. While he could assume a human form, he lacked any physical substance. He had no way to physically interact with the world. There were disadvantages. For example, he could not pull a person out of danger by physical force or hug a person for comfort. There were advantages though. Closed doors were no obstacle.

He entered the house still invisible and listened. Ordinarily the woman of this house would be home and making some noise, even if it was only the sound of her favorite soaps on the telly. The house was silent so she was not home either. His disembodied essence drifted upwards to the spare bedroom on the upper floor. It was full of junk. That told him a fair bit. The room had been cleared out and turned into a Spartan bedroom in June 1992. So it was clear that the latest this could be was April or May of that year. One more place to check - two more, really.

He passed through the stairs into the space below. It was a cupboard designed as additional storage space. But as he could see, this cupboard stored a person. While it was empty, the plywood board with the thin mattress and thin coverings was clearly there. It was as he remembered it. There was a panel behind the pillow on the wall that led into a small void. The battered occupant had hidden something in this panel the last time he used this space as a sleeping quarters, something his Aunt and Uncle did not know he had. If it was there, then he had a fair idea of the date.

It wasn't. So, at the latest it was April or May of 1990.

One last place to look, he thought. His essence drifted into the parlor. As expected, the mantel over the faux fireplace was filled with photographs of a fat, young Boy. Not the one who lived under the stairs, but the son of the owner of the house and his wife. He inspected the photographs closely. They were updated by the doting parents who abused their ward mercilessly every month or so. Pity the gits did not time stamp the photos, he thought. Still it was a clue. The Boy was much younger than he would have been in 1990. He figured it was between 1986 and 1989 based upon the pictures. He could have narrowed it down further except the parents never



displayed a picture that placed the fat Boy in some kind of scale with an object of known size.

Shows they at least knew subconsciously that their bully for a son was a fat tub of lard, he mused to himself. God how he - his Creator - hated this place. So was there any real information as to the date?

He drifted around the parlor. There on a coffee table was a newspaper with a date: Friday, 6 May 1988. He knew it was recent. The owners chucked their paper every day. It was either today's paper or yesterday's. Hard to tell, but he had certainly narrowed down the date. If it was today, perhaps the woman was off to the market which was not far away. That meant the son and his cousin - the Mark - were probably at school. Still the date bothered him.

His mind, far more organized and categorized than his model the Curator, processed the information. He was more akin to a computer in data access and organization than a human. His creator had tried to sort out the events of the Boy's life before school into date periods. May of 1988 was a significant one. He was certain of it - the three weeks in Hell the Boy would remember for the rest of his life. If he was right...

The mail slot clunked and letters fell to the floor. He hovered over them looking at them intently and hoping for a local letter with a date stamp. He was not disappointed. There was a water bill dated May 6. That meant it was no later than May 9th, the following Monday. Where was the Boy?

He knew. He knew the Boy's whole history - a hundred and sixty-eight years of it as if it all of it was yesterday. If the Boy was not here, then it was Saturday and the Boy was at the Library a mile away from this dump. He also knew the Boy was sick and severely injured and in terrible pain that he was trying to hide from the whole world. His guardians were the reason for all of it. The Boy's parents were murdered when he was an infant, although the Boy did not know that yet. For as long as the Boy could remember, he was told his father was a drunk and had been drunk the night his parents died in a car crash. He had barely survived and was sent to live with his useless trollop mother's only redeeming family member, his Aunt, her sister.



Although he found that hard to believe even as a young Boy given how if it were not for his beatings he received from his uncle, his Aunt's would have been horrendous.

The Avatar remembered the days leading up to this fateful weekend and wondered if he was meant to begin the change in time here. Seemed logical. The Boy's Uncle's sister - a spinster fortuitously too old to replicate - had decided to pop by relatively unannounced and invite her family on a vacation to the Caribbean. All the family except the Boy who would be left behind, alone, at all of seven years of age, for three weeks. The Avatar remembered the Boy had been left with only about a week's worth of food for a person his age. The Boy would ration it and stretch it into two weeks. He was helped - if you could call it that - by a serious illness not days after his relations left that left him in a delirium from a dangerously high fever for days where he could not eat. It was a miracle he survived at all.

The spinster arrived that Friday. The day before, the Boy's Aunt had taken him to the barber for a haircut. Understatement, the Boy's older self would remember. The Aunt practically had his head shaved bald. The Boy hated it. To his delight and later dismay, he awoke the next morning with his hair just as it had been before it encountered the aggressive barber's shears. His Aunt freaked. His Uncle literally beat him to within an inch of his life. The Spinster arrived and laughed as her vicious bulldog took pleasure in using the barely conscious Boy's leg as a chew toy. The bleeding welts on his back from the belt lashing he received for kicking the dog would become infected and lead to his near fatal illness. The Boy was later surprised he did not catch rabies from that dog.

Later in life the Boy realized he had been left there to die. While in the Caribbean his Aunt and Uncle filed a missing person's report stating that the Boy had gone swimming and never came back. They were understandably furious - or at least the Uncle was - when they returned home to find him still alive.

Not this time around, the Avatar thought. He knew where the Boy was. The Boy had a refuge from the abuse - the public library. His guardians did not know he could read and his cousin didn't know what a library was. He had hidden there every chance he could since



he was five. He was safe there. The Avatar knew where his target was and was there in seconds, even though he knew it had taken the Boy close to an hour to limp there.

The Boy was at his usual table, the Avatar noted. He was reading a book and had a notepad out. The Avatar knew that the notepad recorded the book, where it was shelved, and what page the Boy had reached for each visit to the library. The Boy had no library card and was not about to get one with his guardians.

The Avatar could see the Boy was injured. He knew what the injuries were. In addition to the dog bites and lash marks, the Boy's left arm was broken in two places and he had at least a couple of broken ribs. Even though the Avatar remembered this, he was amazed at the stoicism considering what had to be excruciating pain. The Avatar stepped off behind a series of bookshelves and assumed a human form - that of the Curator - even though he knew only the Boy would see him.

It ends now, one way or another, the Avatar thought as he walked over to the Boy's table.

"Are you alright, Son?" he asked.

The Boy looked up and faked a grin. "Fine Sir."

"You don't look it. Maybe I should call your parents."

"No!" The Boy replied in panic. "Honestly! I am fine!"

"Sure fooled me. Is there anything wrong?"

He could see the Boy's mind racing, the Boy wanted to tell - needed to. Alas, the fear stopped him. "No Sir. Just reading a book."

The old man nodded. "Me too. Can I join you?"

The Boy shrugged.



The Avatar might be nothing more than energy and visible only by a strange holographic projection, but he could also create props. In this case it was a huge book. His plan was simple. He knew the Boy was nearing collapse from the combinations of his injuries and illness. He also knew the collapse would occur at the Boy's home unless he delayed the Boy's departure by as little as ten minutes. Were the collapse to occur outside and in public - history would change.

How was another matter entirely.

After several minutes the Boy looked up at the old man. "What are you reading?" he asked.

"You first."

"Lord of the Rings - The Fellowship of the Ring," the Boy said.

"I always have liked that series," the Avatar said.

"And you?" the Boy asked.

"Not so much a book as a collection of essays - mathematics. Most I could care less about to be honest. But there are a few on Chaos Theory that have my attention."

"Chaos theory?"

"Very advanced stuff," the Avatar said. "Few real applications yet. The bare bones are easy to understand conceptually, but nasty hard when the math is involved."

"What is it?"

"The logical extension of Heisenberg's Uncertainty Principal, but with far broader potential applications."

"The what?"

"How old are you, Son?"



“Seven.”

“Not sure I can teach you. Know I can’t do the math. But... Imagine the smallest thing you can see. How small is it?”

“Very small.”

“What is it?”

“A grain of sand or salt.”

“Compared to the smallest thing there is, it’s huge! The smallest stable thing known is called an atom. Combine them in the right way and you have a molecule. In the right combination that becomes your grain of sand, or maybe a protein itself part of DNA the building block of all life and so on.

“An atom contains equal parts Protons and Electrons. Protons are huge, electrons are tiny. It is that tiny electron that mucked things up and led to chaos theory. For you see, electrons are freaky. They behave like matter and orbit their proton companion, but they also behave like energy and radiate. A scientist can set up an experiment that shows they are matter or they are energy, but not both at the same time.

“Heisenberg’s Uncertainty Principal stated simply is this: for certain things - like electrons - you can see either where they are or what they are doing, but not both at the same time.

“Chaos theory is this: the greater the detail of your observation or calculation, the less predictable the result. Stated simply, the smallest event can create the greatest consequences. A butterfly flapping its wings can set in motion a series of events leading to a killer storm at sea.

“What’s that mean?”

“Quite simply, the greater detail you study something, the less accurate your analysis.”



“Oh,” the Boy said. “OHHHHH!”

“What?”

“Well, I was thinking about the future, Sir,” the Boy said. “I was wondering what it would be.”

“Why?”

“Cause my present isn’t that good.”

The old man nodded to the Boy as if understanding.

“Before you told me that, I was wondering if the future was fixed or if it could be changed. I want to change mine. I didn’t know how.”

“And?”

“I thought it might take a lot to change it. More than I can do anyway. But that chaos thingy says different, doesn’t it?”

“Indeed, Laddie!”

“A small change - I do one thing slightly different than I would, could mean a whole new future, right? A better one?”

“Ah,” the old man sighed. “One can hope. The future is unpredictable. But yes, one can hope.”

The Boy suddenly winced in pain and paled noticeably. “Sorry, Sir. I really gotta go.” With that, the Boy closed his book and left it on the table and limped off quickly towards the door to the library.

The old man watched him leave. In the original timeline, the Boy had left a half hour or more earlier. In the original timeline, he had not lingered to talk with an old professor about the enigma that was chaos theory. In the old timeline, he had gotten home just in time to collapse from his injuries and increasing illness, out of sight of any who might help him.



The original timeline is about to alter, the Avatar thought. The Boy will be lucky to make it out the door before the effects of his abuse overwhelm him. This time somebody will notice.

The old man - the Avator - smiled and slowly dissolved into his essence.



## DETAILED SUMMARY:

AU. This is a time fic wherein the entire work of Canon is assumed as the base timeline, including the Epilogue. But, as a time flick, we can also ignore all of that, can't we.

For those who want a soul bond - wrong fic...

## CHAPTER THREE: A LITTLE GIRL

SATURDAY, MAY 7, 1988 - LITTLE WHINGING, SURREY, U.K.

A family of three were riding in their BMW that Saturday afternoon. They had decided to take a day trip to see the sights in Surrey, a County just south of London, England. It was mainly the mother's idea. It was just a nice day for a drive and even though they lived in Essex, the County just northeast of London, they had never really seen much in Surrey. They were returning home having spent the day in Guilford, the County Town. They were talking about all the history they had seen - old churches and remains of castles and such. The little girl, the only child, sat in the front passenger seat excitedly talking about everything she had learned that day.

As they were in no rush, the father was taking a less than direct route back to the motorway that would take them back home. He and the mother enjoyed this time with their daughter. She was very bright and seemed to be curious about everything. This keen intellect showed as she was at the top of her primary school class. The only thing that concerned the parents was that there was no indication that she had made any friends in school.

Still she seemed happy, at least around them. In many ways she was and always had been an easy child. She never had to be told to do something more than once and once she was told of a rule, she never broke it. They had been spared the tantrums and moodiness that other parents complained about. And on a day like today, she was precious. Every new sight seemed to captivate her and she had a passion for old places and things. This was much easier on her parents as they shared that passion and really did not have any



interest on taking her to amusement parks all the time. She liked those as well, but not nearly as much.

The car turned into a small town. The sign said "Little Whinging." The little girl commented that it was an odd name, but then noted odd names were hardly uncommon in Britain. She observed that this town seemed all too new. No interesting old buildings at all.

"Suburb," the Father noted. "Probably did not exist until after the War."

"But don't we live in one?"

The father nodded. "Ah, but Loughton is different. It was a town long, long before London grew outward to border it. It's a suburb because the city grew. It was not built as one. This place, though, was built as one by all appearances. People needing a spot to live who did not want to live in the city, but a spot close enough where they could work there if they wanted to. There's a train station the next town over that takes you into Waterloo station. From there you can take the Underground anywhere."

The little girl nodded as their car turned onto what looked like the high street of this small town. She had just noticed the town library and was turning to tell her father when her eyes were caught by something in front of them. She saw a boy had stepped off the curb and into the street right in front of their oncoming car.

"DADDY," the girl yelled.

Her father had seen the boy too. At the same time as his daughter yelled out, he had his foot slamming on the brakes and the car screeched to a halt a mere couple of yards from the boy who now looked at them in shock. She noticed the boy looked scraggly. His clothes were clearly much too big for him and his glasses looked like they were held together with tape. The boy blinked at them once and then fell to the ground in front of their car.



The father wasted no time in alighting from the vehicle. The mother was also out and by the time the girl had extricated herself from her seatbelt and reached her parents, they were checking the boy over.

"The poor child's burning with fever," the mother said. "He's breathing, but unconscious."

"Call an ambulance," the father said to the Girl. "He's hurt bad!"

"Did we..." the Girl began.

"No. His injuries are from before. Now call an ambulance!"

There was a modern call box not far down the street. The Girl knew what to do. Her parents had taught her.

"Emergency," a bored voice said over the phone.

"We need an ambulance," the little girl replied in a frightened voice.

"What happened and where are you," the voice replied realizing she was talking to a scared child.

"A boy just ... just fell down! In the middle of the street just in front of us! We almost hit him."

"Did you?"

"No. But he still fell! Mummy and Daddy are checking him out. They say he's unconscious, he has a terrible fever and he's been hurt."

"Where are you?"

"Little Whinging, I think. A big street, right by the library."

"Okay, I have your call box number. An ambulance and the police have been notified. They should be there in about five minutes."



“Thank you,” a relieved little girl replied just before hanging up. She ran to where her parents were kneeling beside the boy. Her mother looked up at her with tears in her eyes.

“Is he dead?” the Girl asked in shock.

“No Luv,” the mother replied. “But he’s in really bad shape. Whoever did this to him...”

“Wh-what happened to him?”

“He was beaten, apparently. Badly,” the father replied. “I’m guessing the injuries are not life threatening, but he needs to get to a hospital.”

“I called the ambulance,” the Girl replied. “Said it be about five minutes.”

“Good,” the Father replied. “Proud of you, Sweetie.”

The Girl was too worried to smile. She saw her Father checking the Boy’s pockets.

“What are you doing, Daddy?”

“Trying to find any identification,” he replied. “Doesn’t seem to have any. Odd that. Not even a school ID card.”

“He doesn’t go to school?”

“Don’t know. Maybe not. Maybe he just forgot to carry it with him.”

“There’ll be no way to tell his parents?”

The Father nodded. “Although that might be a good thing.”

“Why?”

“His parents probably did this to him,” her Father said without thinking. The eight year old girl knew nothing about child abuse.



“Why would they?”

The Father only shrugged.

“That’s horrible! Evil!”

The Father merely nodded. His eyes had not left the boy until he heard the sirens approaching.

The Avatar had observed the whole scene. Had he been able to take a physical form he would have tried to prevent the Boy from crossing the street in the first place. It was against his nature not to try, but his form prevented him from interacting in a physical way. Moreover, things had worked out even better than he could have hoped. As soon as the little girl jumped out of the car he knew the timeline had changed dramatically. He smiled, knowing the secondary mission of improving the Boy’s home life had been successful. What surprised even him was how easy and simple it had been and how luck was still something he would have to factor in going forward.

All he had done was delay the Boy’s leaving the library by half an hour from the original timeline. Now the Boy would probably never be returned to that cupboard under the stairs. His Guardians would be lucky if they would be allowed custody of their own son - once they got out of prison, that is.

In the original timeline the Aunt and Uncle had returned to find the Boy in a very sorry state. Their treatment of him improved as a result. They knew how lucky they were that no one had found out about the beatings and had no desire that anyone ever would. The beatings stopped. But the mental abuse continued unabated. The Avatar was glad that that future was now history.

---

The ambulance came and took the Boy away. The police arrived as well and the Girl and her parents answered their questions about what happened. Nobody could figure out who the Boy was and those



passersby who did stop did not seem to know him. On a hunch, one of the officers walked into the library. He returned a few minutes later.

“Librarian says that a boy meeting the description is somewhat of a regular. He was in there most of the day reading. As far as she knows the boy has never checked out a book and nobody knows his name.”

“He didn’t even have a library card,” the father noted.

“Sad case,” the police officer nodded, just before finishing up and letting the family head off.

All the way home the Girl, who was clearly upset, pestered her parents about the Boy. She wanted to know where he had been taken.

“He shouldn’t be all alone,” she insisted. Her parents could not disagree and promised her they would call around when they got home.

“That was rather easy,” the Father said not long after they had returned to their home. “He’s been taken to St. Bart’s in London. Once he’s stable, they’ll transfer him to the Children’s Hospital.”

“Can we see him,” the Girl asked?

“Not tonight. We can try in the morning, okay?”

The Girl nodded.

SUNDAY, MAY 8, 1988 - ST. BARTHOLOMEW’S CHILDREN’S HOSPITAL, LONDON, U.K.

The parent’s had hoped that helping the Boy would be enough for her daughter and she would soon forget about him. It was not because they did not feel for the Boy themselves. They had a very good idea what had happened to him and if she remained close to him, she would learn things they felt she was not yet ready to learn - such as just how cruel people really can be to one another. But the poor Girl was besides herself with worry for the Boy she did not even know.



Reluctantly, the parents agreed to take her to the hospital the next day and find out about the Boy. They even agreed to let her visit him when he could have visitors. What they did not tell her is that her visits would not occur if that Boy's family ever showed up. They knew that was one scene they did not want their daughter to see.

The next morning found the family at the hospital in London. The Father had called ahead, told the staff who they were and why they were coming. He was hoping to avoid any hassles.

"May I help you," a Nurse asked as the family stood at the admitting desk of the Hospital's Trauma unit. Most patients here did not walk in.

"We hope so," the Father said. "We're the Grangers. We called ahead and were wondering if we could see or hear about a boy who was admitted yesterday evening from Little Whinging?"

"Are you his family," the Nurse said clearly becoming hostile.

"No," Mr. Granger said. "We were the ones who found the poor boy and rang the ambulance."

"I did that bit," the Girl said brightly.

The Nurse seemed to relax and become pleasant again. "I see. Well, ordinarily, we would only allow family ... except probably in his case. His family shows up and those nice Bobbies over there will want to have a long chat with them," she finished nodding in the direction of two police officers.

The two officers approached the Grangers.

"These are the Grangers," the receptionist said fearing the officers might think they were the culprits, "the ones who found the boy."

"Ah," one of the officer's said, "I'm Inspector Ladd, Metropolitan Police. Want you to know you probably saved that poor lad's life yesterday."

"How bad?" Mr. Granger asked.



"Awful. Worst case I'd seen that didn't involve a body. Whoever did that to him is looking at ten years or better I suspect."

"What happened to him," the Girl asked?

"His been living with bad people," the Inspector said. "They did bad things to him for a long time." He turned to the parents. "Last beatings were probably the worst. Can't say for certain. Rogers?"

"Sir," the other officer said looking at his notebook. "Boy's left arm broken in two places, breaks consistent with abuse. He's got four broken ribs, left side, punctured left lung, numerous contusions on his abdomen and upper torso. Severe lacerations on his back, consistent with a whipping, probably with a belt buckle. Oh, an my favorite," he added derisively, "probably attacked by a dog. Bite marks and puncture wounds on his left leg. Doc's feel these injuries did not happen yesterday, but certainly within the last few days. Let's see. Oh yes, severe infection with an accompanying high fever. He was seriously anemic, but that was probably due to internal bleeding as opposed to any long term health disorder. He's also suffering from acute malnutrition."

"They were starving him?" The Girl said in shock.

"Practically. X-rays show several other injuries, much older. Kid's been someone's punching bag for a long while. No evidence he's ever received proper medical care aside from seeing an optician."

"How can they say that?" Mrs. Granger asked.

"Kid's got cavities. Must hurt like the dickens for him to eat."

"Bastards," Mr. Granger muttered.

"At least," the Officer agreed.

"People," the Nurse said, "this is the attending physician, Dr. Howard. Doctor.? These are the Grangers who found the boy."



"How is he?" Mrs. Granger asked.

"We had to operate to fix his lungs and ribs," the Doctor said. "Best I can say now is he survived the procedure. He's in recovery and we've placed him in a medically induced coma. We think he'll need at least four more surgeries to repair all the damage he's sustained. We'll also see to his teeth. It's a bloody miracle he's alive at all, really."

"How long will he remain in Hospital?" Mr. Granger asked.

"Depends on his recovery," the Doctor said. "A month best case. We have no plans on releasing him until he's fully recovered."

"Physical therapy?"

"Probably. Can't say yet. But that can be done on an out-patient basis. He'll need a home, though."

Mr. Granger nodded.

"Any idea who he is?" the Inspector asked.

The Grangers shook their heads.

"We live in Essex," Mr. Granger said. "Took a weekend drive to Surrey. No clue. You?"

The Inspector also shook his head. "No missing persons reports matching his description. We're here in case his family shows. If they do, we'll invite them for a chat."

"And if they don't?"

"We give it a couple of days, then we'll start chatting with the primary schools in Surrey. That assumes, of course, he ever went to school. Worth a try. Fair few abused children do attend schools. They try to hide it and such, but..."

"What's going to happen to him?" the Girl asked?



“He won’t be going back to his home, if that’s where this happened,” the Inspector said. “And that’s where it probably did. Foster care, most like, poor lad.”

The Parents looked at each other and nodded.

“Can we see him?” the Girl asked.

The Doctor nodded. “Only for a couple of minutes.”

“Daddy can we?”

“You go, Sweetie.”

“Don’t you want to?”

“We will later. Your Mum and I want to talk with the Hospital Social Worker about him.”

“Why?”

“Tell you later, Dear,” Mrs. Granger replied.

---

The Girl walked into the room. The Boy lay on a bed surrounded by machines. There were tubes everywhere: sticking into his arms, down his nose, and a large one down his throat. A machine was making a hissing sound that sounded to her like breathing. She walked slowly to his side, tears were beginning to fall from her eyes. He looked so helpless.

Absently, she brushed the hair away from his face. He was still hot with fever and the Girl looked around for a cloth and some water. She found it and after wetting the cloth, walked back over and began to wipe the Boy’s forehead and face. Without knowing it, she took his right hand in hers as she did. The tears never stopped falling.



“Why did they do this to you,” she said. “Why?”

“Who are you? I don’t even know your name but feel that I should.

“Why? I know you probably cannot hear me. We found you and got you help. I want to know that you get out of this. You don’t deserve what happened to you.”

The Avatar was watching - as he had been since he found the Boy. The Avatar changed into his human form, confident that he was still unseen to anyone but the Boy in the coma. It was easier to watch what was going on in this form, and what was happening was truly unexpected. He had not expected this turn of events.

“I wish I knew your name,” the girl cried. “You deserve a name - something I can call you. You deserve much more than you have gotten in life. You did not deserve what has happened! I wish I knew your name.”

“I tell you what,” the Girl continued. “Until you can tell me your real name, I’ll call you Frodo. How’s that sound? He’s my favorite character from the Lord of the Rings. Do you know those books? Frodo is brave yet vulnerable - like you I suppose. You have to be brave, Frodo, to have survived what happened to you. I don’t know how you did it. I’m just glad we found you and maybe now you can have a happy life. Yes. Frodo fits. And I’ll try to be your Samwise. I’ll try to keep you safe. Please, Frodo, please live. I do care about you.

“And maybe - just maybe - if you live, my Frodo - you can come and live with us and not with whoever did this to you. It would be wonderful, wouldn’t it? We have a nice house and I attend a good school. I admit I don’t really have any friends, Frodo, but we could be friends, couldn’t we? Please? I need a friend.” The Girl dissolved into tears.

And you shall have one, the Avatar thought.

A/N: Minor revision based upon a research mistake some of you caught. Originally, I had the train from Surrey arriving at an



Underground Station, not a rail station. (My notes combined National Rail and Underground information. Oops.



## CHAPTER FOUR: AWAKWNING

FRIDAY, MAY 13, 1988 - ST. BARTHOLOMEW'S CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL, LONDON, U.K.

The Avatar had observed the Boy over the next week or so. The Boy remained in a coma as he underwent four more operations to repair his damaged bones, both the recent damage and the older injuries. The Girl had come to the hospital every day after school. Apparently, even though she lived miles away in Essex, she attended a parochial school only a few blocks from the hospital. She would stay until seven in the evenings and then take the Underground to her hometown where one of her parents would pick her up. The Avatar had not seen this as he was tied to the Boy. He knew because she had told the boy all about herself, even though the Boy could not hear her.

She would do her homework sitting beside his unconscious form. Once done, she would talk to him and hold his hand. If she ran out of things to say, she would read to him from *The Lord of the Rings*, not knowing he was reading that work the day he was found. The Avatar noted that the Boy seemed to improve whenever she was around him. The Girl always asked about his condition and seemed eager for the day when he would finally be awake.

The Avatar noted she was usually his only visitor. On one day her mother had joined her vigil. Aside from that the Boy had no one. In a way the Avatar was pleased. There were several people the Avatar's memories told him that should stay as far away from the Boy as possible, at least until he had an opportunity to develop a relationship with the Boy.

The Girl learned Thursday night that the doctor's planned to take the Boy off of sedation. Hopefully he would be awake sometime the next day. They still had no idea who he was. No one had come looking for him. It was almost as if no one wanted him at all.

"That's not true, Frodo," the Girl said. "I want you in my life. You're my first real friend, as odd as that may sound given you've been asleep this whole time. But I feel like we are and can be friends. I wish I



could tell you what will happen to you when you're well enough to leave this place. All I know for certain is you probably are going to live with someone else and not your parents. I hope it's with me, but Mum and Dad aren't saying anything. I don't know why. Perhaps they just don't want me getting my hopes up. If that's it they are failing as each day I get even more hopeful.

"Goodnight, my friend Frodo," she said, kissing the Boy on the forehead as she had done everyday since her first visit. "Sleep well and sweet dreams. I'll see you again tomorrow."

The Avatar hoped the Boy would wind up with the Girl's family and was annoyed there was nothing he could do to see to it that it happened. The Boy would be safe there. Safer than anywhere the Avatar could imagine and aside from getting the Boy away from his relatives, the Boy's safety was his most important mission at this time.

---

The Avatar was maintaining his vigil early Friday afternoon when a nurse entered the hospital room. Apparently the Boy had heard the noise and his eyes opened for the first time in over a week. He tried to speak, but could only manage a cough. It was enough to attract the nurse's attention. She walked over to the Boy and poured a large glass of water.

"I see sleeping beauty is finally awake," the Nurse said. "Here's a tumbler of water, Son. Drink up. That way you can talk if you want to."

The Boy drank the water as it he was dying of thirst. In a way he was. While he was getting plenty of fluids, it was all intravenously. Not a drop of water had passed down his throat in a week.

"Would you like another glass?"

The Boy nodded eagerly. He drank this one even faster than the first.

"Th-thanks," the Boy finally managed. "Wh-who are you? Wh-where am I? What happened? Lord, I must be in so much trouble."



“Slow down,” the Nurse said. “I’ll answer your questions if you promise to answer mine. Deal?”

The Boy nodded.

“And you promise to tell me the truth no matter what?”

The Boy paled.

“I promise you, nothing will happen to you if you do.”

“How can you...” the Boy began.

“Tut, tut. Rest assured I can make that promise and keep it. Now, as to who I am, my name is Gail and I am a pediatrics Nurse. Who are you by the way? That’s the big question as nobody here knows that.”

“I’m Harry,” the Boy said. “Harry Potter.”

“Nice to meet you, Harry. Now your next question was where are you, right?”

Harry nodded.

“You’re in St. Bart’s Children’s Hospital in London.”

“Never been to London before,” Harry said. “Wow.”

“You passed out crossing a street last Saturday. A nice family saw you go down and called for an ambulance. You were in really bad shape and you were transferred here Saturday night because the local hospital was ill equipped to deal with everything that was wrong with you.”

“How long have I been here?”

“Today’s Friday so almost a week. You were in really bad shape. You’ve been asleep since you arrived.”



“What was wrong with me?”

“A lot of things. Broken bones. Cuts. You had a nasty infection. We had to operate on you five times to fix everything.”

“It didn’t seem that bad,” Harry said.

“Are you used to being hurt like that?”

Harry nodded.

“Did your parents hurt you?”

“My parents are dead. Died in a car crash when I was a baby.”

“Where do you live, Harry?”

“Number 4 Privet Drive, Little Whinging.”

“That’s in Surrey, right?”

“I guess. I don’t know.”

“Well they found you in Surrey.”

“I suppose.”

“Who do you live with?”

“My Aunt, Uncle and Cousin.”

“Did they hurt you?”

The Boy was silent. She knew they had. “The truth Harry, remember.”

“Yes.”

“Yes you remember or yes they hurt you?”



“Both. Well not so much Aunt Petunia, she’s just mean, but the others did. Mainly my Uncle.”

“I see. Why?”

“They say I’m a freak and they want to beat the freakiness out of me for my own good.”

“What do you mean by a freak?”

“Don’t know. They don’t tell me. If I knew maybe I could stop being one.”

“I see.”

“Do you think I’m a freak?”

“No. Not at all, Harry. You’re a scared little boy who has been through what no child should ever have to go through.”

Harry nodded. The Nurse heard his breath hitch. He was crying now. “Why do they hate me?” He wailed.

“I don’t know,” the Nurse said softly. “I do know you don’t deserve to be hated.”

“How can you be sure?”

“You seem like a nice young boy. Do you hurt other people?”

“No.”

“Tease them, make fun of them?”

“No.”

“Do you want to?”

“Not really, no. I mean sometimes I wish the Dursleys would die, but I don’t...”



"That's normal, Harry, under the circumstances."

"I want to be normal," Harry said.

"Why might you think you're not?"

"My only relatives hate me. I live in a closet under the stairs. I have to do all the chores while my Cousin does none. They don't let me eat much, usually table scraps and even then, only when my Uncle's sister is not visiting with her dogs. I want to have friends, but if anyone tries to be nice to me my Cousin Dudley and his gang beat them up - and then me. Every night I dream of someone taking me away from there, but until now it's never happened.

"How long do I have to stay here?"

"At least three more weeks, Harry."

Harry started to cry. "They'll kill me! They won't pay for this! They'll say it's all my fault."

"Harry, that's not your worry, okay? You probably will never see them again."

"I won't?"

"Not unless you want to."

"But where will I live?"

"With someone else. Someone who will take care of you properly."

"Oh," Harry seemed disappointed. "Who?"

"Don't know yet. They are working on it. Do you know no one except the family that found you has looked for you?"

Harry shrugged. "Not surprised," he said. "My Uncle's sister came over last Friday, I suppose. She took my Aunt, Uncle and Cousin on a



surprise holiday to some place called Care Bean. They're not supposed to be back for a few weeks."

"And where were you to stay?"

"At the house."

"Who was to look after you?"

"No one. They left me some food. I can cook."

"You were to stay at home alone for weeks?"

Harry nodded.

"What about school?"

"I was told not to go. I was told that they'd get in trouble if I went and Dudley didn't and if they got into trouble, well..."

"I see. Why were you out last Saturday?"

"I went to the Library. I like reading, but they don't let me read at home. I go to the Library 'cause they never look for me there and there are loads of books."

"What books have you read?"

"Loads. Just finished the Chronicles of Narnia and the Hobbit. I was reading the Fellowship of the Ring. Do you have that here? If I am going to be here, I'd like to..."

"I'll check, okay?"

"Thanks," Harry said with a slight smile.

The Nurse nodded. "Feel up to a few more questions?"

Harry nodded.



“Who hurt you arm?”

“Uncle Vernon. He hurt my chest too. It was Thursday and I didn’t want to get a haircut. He told me not to be a freak and hurt me.”

“Your back?”

“Him again, Friday. I kicked his sister’s dog.”

“Why did you do that?”

“It was biting my leg and that really hurt.”

“Why was it biting you?”

“She set it on me ‘cause she didn’t like my tone.”

“I see. How old are you, Harry?”

“Seven.”

“Do you know when you were born?”

“July 31st, 1980. Didn’t know that at all until I went to school.”

“You never had a birthday?”

Harry shook his head.

“Do you want to go back to your relatives?”

“No. But I probably will have to.”

“We’ll see. Final question: are you hungry?”

Harry nodded.

---

---



Gail Nelson was more than just a pediatrics Nurse. True, she had the degree and had worked as one for a few years. But she had seen abused children far too often and knew how hard it was for law enforcement to obtain sufficient information on the abusers. She developed a talent for getting the children to talk. It was soon noticed and now she was an Officer with the Metropolitan Police investigating abuse cases. All through her interview with Harry, a recording device recorded the conversation. She would remain at the Hospital for now as a Nurse to keep an eye on the child. The tape recording was on its way to New Scotland Yard.

Within hours, a warrant issued for a search of the Dursely home in Surrey. There was ample evidence of abuse that the fastidious Mrs. Dursley's household cleaning products could not hide from the forensics team. Half of the ground floor had been splattered with the boy's blood at one time or another. The X-rays showed years of abuse and neglect. The poor boy was emaciated on top of all his other problems.

By the next day, a warrant was issued for the arrest of the Dursleys. It was passed to immigration control once it was verified that the Dursleys had indeed left the country for the Bahamas. They would be arrested upon their return, including Marge Dursley for the dog attack. A third warrant called for the dog to be detained and destroyed.

Social services had reached a decision regarding his placement, but Harry would not be told yet. In fact Harry was unaware of everything happening outside of his hospital room.

---

When the Girl arrived for her daily visit Harry was asleep again. The Nurse had told her that he had woken up earlier and had a meal, but the sedation was still wearing off. He should be awake tomorrow. The Girl was a little disappointed that he had been awake and she had not been there. But at least she now knew his name: Harry Potter.

She sat next to him and noticed the book lying on his slowly rising chest. She almost squealed with delight. He was reading the same



book she had been reading to him. He was much further along than she had been last night, so it seems he had been reading it before all this happened. Nobody she knew her own age had read that book. Maybe he would not be put off by her as everyone else her age seemed to be. Maybe she could finally have a friend!

She did her homework as well as an essay that was not due for a week. She knew Harry was seven and would turn eight at the end of July. She wondered if they were in the same year in school and if they would go to the same school once he was better. She hoped they would.

As she was told not to wake him up, once her homework was done she held his hand and read her own book. She had finished the Lord of the Rings. It was not easy for her at eight years of age, but she loved the books and was now trying a similar series that was said to be a little easier and quicker to read: The Chronicles of Narnia.

At seven Harry had still not awoken. Her mother arrived to take her home and promised her they would return at nine the next morning. If Harry was willing, she could spend the day with him. They were told it might help with his recovery and she wanted to help. As always, she kissed Harry on the forehead just before she left and whispered "See you tomorrow, Frodo." She had an impish grin when she saw what looked like a smile on his face.

---

Harry finally woke up around nine that evening. The lights were still on in his room and the book was still on his chest. He reached to the nightstand to his right with his good arm for his glasses. They were new. He had no idea what had happened to his old ones. They fit better than any pair he had ever worn and he could see more clearly, mainly because the lenses were not scratched up.

As soon as his glasses were on, he saw he had another visitor.

"You were with me at the Library," Harry said.



The Old Man nodded. "I believe I told I thought you needed help."

Harry nodded.

"Seems I underestimated how bad you were, Harry."

"You know my name?"

The Old Man nodded. "You're Harry James Potter, son of James Tiberius Potter and Lily Marie (Evans) Potter. You were born on July 31st, 1980 in a village called Godrics Hollow in Devonshire. Your parents were murdered on October 31st, 1981..."

"How do you know all that? I never knew my parents names or where I was born. And what's this about murder? I was told they died in a car crash."

"Your Aunt and Uncle told you that?"

Harry nodded.

"Ask yourself this question, Harry. Why should you believe them?"

Harry pondered the question and looked up with a shrug.

"Your relatives have no reason to tell you the truth and, at least to them, every reason to lie to you."

"Why?"

"Later, Harry. You need not learn all of the secrets of the World in one sitting. At your age, despite how bright you are, I would advise against it and even more so given your current condition."

"How do you know this?"

"Again, we'll save that for later. But I will tell you. I promise. Suffices to say, I do know. I know a lot about you. Have to for my job."

"I thought you're a professor."



"I do look the part, don't I," the Old Man chuckled. "Indeed, I was one at one point in my youth. But no. That's not my job."

"What is your job?"

"For lack of a more apt description, I am your Guardian."

"You mean when I leave here I'll live with you?"

"No. It's not that kind of Guardian. I am supposed to watch out for you and, later, to teach you things that you cannot learn from books or in school."

"Why?"

"Later Harry. Tonight my sole task is to introduce myself to you."

"Oh."

"I could easily talk your ear off, you see. But you do need your rest. In time you will learn everything and more, okay?"

"I suppose."

"I'll stop by sometime tomorrow, Harry. I want to meet this friend of yours."

"I don't have any friends," Harry sulked. "Nobody likes me."

"Ah. Yes. Well what about that Nurse?"

"Nurse Gail?"

The Old Man nodded. "Do you think she doesn't like you?"

"No. Maybe she does."

"And me?"



“Maybe.”

“And there is a girl about your age who has visited you every day since you arrived here. Does that sound like something you would do if you didn’t like someone?”

“Maybe she’s a nutter,” Harry quipped.

“Anything is possible,” the Old Man said. “But I don’t think so. She’ll be here in the morning. Give her the benefit of the doubt and assume she likes you until you know otherwise. I have a feeling you’ll never know otherwise,” the Old Man smiled.

Harry nodded.

“Until tomorrow then,” the Old Man said as he rose. “Sweet Dreams, Harry.”

“I never have sweet dreams,” Harry sulked.

“Oh?”

“I dream of horrible things all the time. My only ‘good’ dreams are dreams about never having to see the Dursleys again.”

“A dream, Harry, that appears will come true. Dream about that then.”

“How?”

“Close your eyes and clear your mind of all thoughts, worries and fears and focus on your hopes and desires. The rest should follow.”

“I’ll try,” Harry said. “Do you have a name, Sir?”

“Indeed I do. Again - later. For now, you can call me Sensei.”

“What’s that?”

“It defines my relationship with you: teacher, mentor, guide, guardian and other things.”



“Oh.”

“Good night, Harry.”

“Good night, Sensei,” Harry said closing his eyes. Once his eyes closed, Sensei disappeared.



## CHAPTER FIVE: FINDING A FRIEND

SATURDAY, MAY 14, 1988 - ST. BARTHOLOMEW'S CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL, LONDON, U.K.

Harry woke up at around seven the next morning. He found that an orderly was waiting for him to wake up. He was told he was allowed to leave the bed only for trips to the loo, otherwise he was to remain in bed for the next few days at least. His left arm was in a cast and he soon found his upper torso was wrapped in bandages. There were also bandages on both of his legs and his right arm. He had asked about that. It seemed that the Doctors had to re-break some bones and pin them together so they could heal properly. These were old breaks, but while it was painful to shuffle to the loo, at least he could manage it. All things considered, he was in far more pain the day he went to the library.

Another orderly washed him. He could not take a shower or a bath due to his cast, bandages and other reasons. The cleansing was far from thorough, but better than nothing. This orderly, a young woman, also washed his hair. He was placed in something not unlike a barber's chair for that. When she was done his hair laid fairly flat for the first time Harry could remember.

"What did you do to my hair?" Harry asked in surprise.

"What? Don't you like it?"

"It's not that. It's just - well - it never looked like that before. What did you do?"

"Not much, really," the young woman said. "Just the right selection of hair care products for those with unmanageable locks. Of course, using these, you'll need your hair washed every day."

"Why'd you do it?"

"Your girlfriend is coming today. Can't have you looking like a wild man now, can we?"



"I don't have a girlfriend," Harry protested.

"Wouldn't tell her that if I were you. She's been here every day since you arrived here. I think she likes you."

"I was asleep the whole time."

"Still. She seems nice. I think you could use a friend about your own age."

Harry nodded.

He soon enjoyed the largest breakfast - no the largest meal of any kind he had ever remembered having. He was stuffed. Had he been properly fed, he would have thought little of the meal. But to him it was amazing and he would have complimented the chef had he known it was customary to do that.

Cleaned and fed, he sat in his adjustable bed reading his book. Part of him was still very concerned about what the Dursleys would do and say about this. He was not supposed to interact with anyone, lest his freakish nature bring shame to them. Still, it was as if he was on holiday.

At a little after nine in the morning, as Harry was reading his book, movement caught his eye and he saw the door to the room opening. Expecting some kind of Nurse or something, he was surprised to see a girl about his age enter. She had brown, curly hair that seemed almost as unruly as his own, even though his was strait and nearly jet black. She was carrying books with her and seemed lost in thought as she entered. She was not beautiful, but Harry thought she was quite fetching in her own way. He liked her immediately.

She looked up and the thinking had seemed to stop once she saw Harry. Harry's gaze returned to his book out of sheer embarrassment and he could tell he was blushing. He wondered if this was the "friend" who had been by his side every day since he had come here. He was surprised when he realized almost immediately that he hoped she was. She then smiled at him. That was all it took for her to become his friend. She had such a nice smile, he thought.



"You're awake," she said softly. She had a nice voice, Harry thought.

"Yeah," he said at a loss for words.

"I..." she blushed furiously.

After an awkward silence, Harry finally decided someone had to say something. "I - er - was told that someone has been visiting me every day since I was here - erm..."

She blushed even more and could do little more than glance at him.

"A girl, they say. She - er - well - she and her parents found me?"

The Girl nodded.

"They - um - they didn't say she was pretty," he said softly.

"I was the girl," she said defensively.

"I know - er - well I guessed so."

"I am not pretty!"

"To me you are. Are you an angel?"

"No!" She replied in shock.

"Sure fooled me," he said. "Only an angel would look after a sorry sod like me."

"Language!" she said. "And why wouldn't I? You looked like you could use a friend," she added defensively.

"I'd like that," Harry said softly. "It's just..." He couldn't help it. He didn't want to, but he began to cry.

"What's - what's wrong?" she asked.



"I've never had a friend. I wanted one. Nobody wants to be my friend!"

"Why not?"

"'Cause I'm a freak! 'Cause my Cousin Dudley and his gang will beat up anyone who smiles at me. 'Cause I'm worthless!"

"What makes you say that?" and there were tears in her voice as well.

"Cause that's what they've always told me!"

"Your parents told you that?" she asked in shock.

"My parents are DEAD," he sniped back, immediately feeling guilty. "Sorry," he said as she took a step back. "I'm sorry. I didn't mean it that way." She seemed to relax. "Sometimes I wish it was tattooed on my forehead so people would not ask."

"What?" she asked.

"Parents Dead. Everyone seems to think things - like they're alive. But they died when I was just a baby."

"So who takes care of you?"

"No one really. I live with my mother's sister and her family, but they hardly care for me at all. They hate me."

"Why?"

Harry shrugged. "I'm a freak and I cost them money and..."

"Nonsense!"

Harry shrugged. "It's what they say to me all the time."

"They're wrong, Frodo."

"Frodo?"



“Oops. Sorry. I...” She blushed.

“You think I’m a freak too?”

“No! It’s not that!” She said defensively. “You didn’t - er - have a name and I couldn’t call you ‘Boy’ or something.”

“Why not?” Harry asked bitterly. “They do.”

“Cause you’re a person. You deserve a name, so I picked one that I thought suited you in a way.”

“Frodo?”

“You’re reading the book.”

“Barely started,” Harry said. “Struggling through the Council of Elrond now.”

“Frodo is brave, kind and tragic in a way,” the Girl said. “Don’t know why, but it seemed to fit.”

Harry smiled. “Well, I guess I kind of feel like Frodo did when he woke up in Rivendell after almost dying after the flight from Weathertop. Is this Rivendell?” he quipped.

The girl giggled. She then just shrugged.

“I’m Harry, by the way. Harry Potter.”

The Girl relaxed. She then rolled her eyes and groaned. “Honestly! Where are my manners!” she exclaimed. “I’m Hermione Granger.”

“Hermione?”

She nodded.

“That name suits you, I think.”



“Why? Nobody likes it.”

“Nobody fits it like you,” Harry said. “It’s pretty in a way most names are not, like you.”

Hermione blushed again.

“Oh hush,” she said. “I am not pretty.”

“Suit yourself,” Harry replied. “But can I at least think that?”

She blushed again. “I’m the one supposed to be making you feel better, H-harry,” she said softly.

“Why?”

“You’ve been hurt.”

Harry nodded.

“Who? How? Why?”

“Do you really want to know?”

She nodded.

“It’s not a good story at all.”

She shrugged.

Harry sighed. “I woke up yesterday, you know. You weren’t here either time. I spoke with Nurse Gail first and someone else later. Before yesterday, I would never have told anyone anything. I was scared what they might think, and even more scared about what my relatives would do if they ever found out. But not anymore. When I finally did talk about it, I actually felt better. Are you sure you want to hear? It’s not a nice story.”

She nodded slowly.



He then began telling her the story of his life, such as it had been. It took him until lunchtime. She quietly cried through most of it. She never knew people could be that cruel for no apparent reason. The beatings, practical slavery, constant put downs, the fact he never had a birthday nor a present; all were more than she could imagine. The fact that his Cousin was spoiled beyond belief at the same time made even less sense. As bad as her life was - for she had no real friends - his was far worse and she felt a little guilty at her own unhappiness. At least her parents loved and accepted her. Harry did not even have that.

"Why?" she asked.

"They hated my parents," Harry shrugged. "Said my dad was a lay about drunk and my Mum a tart - whatever that is. I just know it's not good. I don't believe it. Never have. Still..."

"I'm sorry, Harry."

"Not your fault. You like me, right?"

She nodded.

"A first for me. I like you too, by the way."

"R-really?"

Harry nodded.

"Aside from my parents and teachers, nobody likes me."

"Then they are the stupid ones. What are you reading?" Harry asked looking at her books.

"Chronicles of Narnia," she said. "After the Lord of the Rings, I needed a lighter read, I guess."

"Did it opposite," Harry said. "Already read those books before The Hobbit and now The Lord of the Rings. Maybe I should have done it your way."



“You like reading?”

“They don’t let me watch the Telly,” Harry said. “I guess there are a lot of normal things they don’t let me do. I’ve never been to the pictures, never been to a restaurant, never been allowed to go on a field trip, never seen the sea, never had a birthday or Christmas present. Until I went to school, I didn’t know that most kids did those things. I just thought it was something my Cousin got that I didn’t get.”

“That’s horrible, Harry.”

Harry shrugged.

“They would take my Cousin places and I would be left with Mrs. Figg. She was a bit daft and was always on about her bazillion cats. But she was nice to me and taught me things. She taught me to play piano and I could read by the age of four. Used to go to her place on my own just to read. She got sick last year and I started going to the library instead. When she got better, I went there for piano.

“My relatives don’t know about any of that. Mrs. Figg and the Library were places where I could escape, where I was safe if only for a little while. My relatives don’t know nearly as much about me as they think. I’m not sure they know I can read. Reading is - well - an escape from them. Every chance I get, I’m in a library.”

“Me too. And school?”

“I was finishing my second year before this,” Harry said. “Top of my class, my teachers said. Never let the relatives know. They would have beaten me for doing better than their Dudley. I found where the teachers kept the reports and forged the ones my relatives saw, making sure I was no better than the dumb kid of theirs. I also forged my Uncle’s signature on my real reports. Not honest, I admit. But, I’d rather not think of what would happen if they were to learn that my teachers wanted to promote me a grade while they held my cousin back.”



"I'm a third year," Hermione said. "My parent's started me a year early. I guess we should be the same year, normally."

"Maybe we will be. I've practically finished third year as well."

"That would be wonderful, Harry. We could study together and everything!"

"Just so long as you don't mind coming in second to me on occasion."

Hermione pouted. "I always like being the best."

"Think of it this way," Harry said. "Now you could have someone to help you be your best and I could have someone to help me be mine."

"I - well as long as it was you, I guess I could live with that. But Harry? You don't go to my school. How could this happen?"

Harry shrugged. "They've told me I probably will not have to return to my Aunt and Uncle's place. They say I probably will live with another family. They haven't said who." Harry now sounded concerned. "Who knows where I'll wind up? I am an orphan."

"Harry," Hermione said in a small voice, "I've been begging my parents to let you live with us."

"They said no way, didn't they."

"No, Harry. I've been begging them for a brother or sister for a while as well and they've never told me no. They just say 'we'll see.' It's the same about you except my Dad said 'we'll try.' I think that means that there is a chance you'll be living with us, Harry."

"But not a great one."

Hermione shrugged. "I don't know, Harry. But assuming you have that chance?"

"Need to meet your parents."



Hermione nodded. "I think I can kind of understand. They are good I think. They're my best friends - until now."

"Well, I'd like to meet them then. I mean, even if I go somewhere else, maybe we could keep in touch?"

"I'd like that, Harry. Rather it was - well, you know."

Harry nodded. He had decided Hermione was indeed a friend. Now that he found her, he did not want to lose her - ever. Little did he know then that the feeling, whatever it was, was mutual. He barely noticed that she was now sitting beside him and had his hand in hers. He was too busy staring into her brown eyes to notice. When he finally realized she was holding his hand, he did not mind at all even though it was the first time he had ever let someone do that without getting upset. She was smiling at him and it was hopeless. He could not help but smile right back.

He had no idea how long they were like that. Had he thought about it, it was a little weird. He was only seven. Girls were supposed to be "icky." For some reason this Hermione was not and he did not know why nor did he care. She seemed natural to him, as if she was supposed to be here.

Hermione was having similar thoughts and similar lack of thought. Boys were not supposed to be interesting at her age - except as a point of conversation about how messed up they all were. You most certainly were not supposed to feel this way about them, much less want to and need to hold their hands - or worse. She really wanted to hug him, but the injuries she knew he had sustained ruled out that option for now - FOR NOW. Honestly, she thought. Why do I even want to? Because he needs a hug, she then rationalized.

"Her - Hermione?" Harry asked.

"Yes Harry?"

"Can I tell you something?"



“Anything.”

He knew he could, but he was scared. “It’s, well, I’ve never told anyone this and I’m afraid you might not like me if I do.”

“Don’t be silly, Harry....”

“I’m serious, Hermione. I’m scared you won’t like me.”

“Harry? Is it bad?”

“I don’t know. I don’t know what it is, but it scares me and it could happen and I’m afraid it might scare you and I won’t have a friend.”

“Harry, I promise not to be scared and to always be your friend.”

“Okay,” Harry took a deep breath. “You know my Uncle beat me - a lot.”

Hermione nodded.

“I rarely ever broke any rules or did anything that asked for it. I think I was a good kid - better than most at staying out of trouble. Still he beat me a lot. He and my Aunt say I’m a freak and they wanted to beat the freakishness out of me.”

“That’s horrible, Harry. That’s...”

“Please,” Harry begged and Hermione stopped. He looked scared and she felt nothing but concern for him. “Sometimes, I make strange things happen,” he said in a soft voice.

Hermione paled and part of Harry thought she was going to run away from him just like everyone else. She did not. She simply squeezed his hand a little harder. “Like what? You can tell me, Harry. I’m not afraid and I won’t leave you, ever.”

Harry sighed. “It’s not predictable. It happened only when I am really upset. It’s like I want to lash out and then I do, but I don’t move or say anything. Stuff just happens.”



She nodded.

“Like last week. A couple of days before you found me, my Aunt was getting ready for my Uncle’s sister’s visit - now there’s a piece of work. Anyway she felt I needed a proper haircut. She took me to the barber and had my hair cut so short I looked bald. I hated it. I hated it so much.

“The next morning, I woke up and she freaked when she saw me. My hair had grown back overnight. My Uncle beat me senseless. I think that’s when he broke my arm and hurt my ribs.

“You must hate me.”

“Why would I hate you, Harry?”

“‘Cause that’s not normal. ‘Cause I’m a freak.”

Hermione felt very sorry for him. “Harry. I don’t hate you. I agree that that’s not normal. But if you’re a freak then so am I.”

“Wh-what do you mean?”

“Well, I’ve never grown my hair back overnight, but strange things happen to me as well. It’s almost like magic.” She then told Harry about some of the odd things that had happened to her. In some ways, hers were even stranger - and arguably more dangerous than any of Harry’s “freakishness.” There was a time the year before when she was walking home from somewhere when three older girls and two boys, neighborhood bullies, tried to beat her up. She curled herself into a ball to protect herself and they got very mad. Suddenly she burst into flames. Hermione actually laughed at this memory, the thought of four of the five soiling themselves was rather funny, Harry thought.

“Do your parents know?” Harry asked.

Hermione nodded.



“And they don’t hate you?”

“No Harry. They don’t. Most of my - er - outbursts are far more benign. They say I have a special gift. They try to help me learn to control it. But they love me and would not have me any other way. I always thought I was the only one like me.”

“Me too.”

“I’m glad I’m not, Harry. I’m glad you’re like me. I’m glad I’m not alone.”

“Me too.” Harry then laughed.

“What?” Hermione asked.

“As bad as my life has been, Hermione, the best day before today was the day your Dad almost ran me over.”

“Why?”

“Because that day led to today. I finally have a friend and someone like me to talk to.”

“I’m glad we met too, Harry.” She then surprised Harry by kissing him on the forehead. Harry blushed furiously.

“Why did you do that?”

“I wanted to,” Hermione said, “and you looked like you could use it.”

“Nobody’s kissed me before.”

Hermione blushed. “Well...”

“What?”

“I have.”

“Have what?”



"Kissed you before, Harry. But you were asleep. It's nicer when you're awake."

"So, you're my girlfriend?"

They were both blushing now.

"We're a bit young for that," Hermione finally said. "One day. Maybe."

"Yeah," Harry said. "That would be nice. Maybe."

Sensei observed the entire scene as the two children became friends and he was surprised. The Harry Potter he knew would not have either been so open to this new person, nor would have been comfortable with either her touch or that kiss. The Harry Potter he knew was very closed off and extremely uncomfortable with any form of physical intimacy. That Harry Potter did adapt, but the introvert remained a major part of his being for the rest of his days.

This Harry Potter was only momentarily uncomfortable and clearly opened up to this Hermione quickly. This Harry was not uncomfortable around her or with her as the original would have been. Something had clearly changed, Sensei thought and he pondered.

Until one week ago, this Harry and the original were one and the same person. They had the same memories, experiences and personalities. Why did meeting Hermione now change things? Why was he able to talk to Nurse Gail about his home life, something the original had rarely ever done and even then it was seldom intentional and never in any detail. The Harry in this hospital bed was already very different than the last time. What had changed?

Then Sensei recalled that horrible month of May 1988 the last time around. Before that beating, before being left for dead, both Harry's still had hope in their hearts. They both hoped that somehow, someday they would be accepted by their family and by others. They both worked really hard at everything in the hopes that someone would see that they really were not as worthless as claimed.



In the original timeline, all true hope and desire died on the hallway floor of Number 4 Privet Drive where that Harry lay alone and ignored for a week. What ever drive he had died there too. He went from the top of his class to near the bottom the next term and never tried to climb back up. It had been one blow too many and he closed himself off from everyone. After that horrible May, he believed all the horrible things his relatives said about him and his parents. It left him alone for a long time. It also left him starving for any sign of acceptance and that would be a major problem in later years.

When Harry finally made friends, he still kept them at an emotional arms length. Yet, at the same time, he became perhaps too dependent upon anyone whom he came to trust. He trusted certain people blindly, never arriving at his own conclusions unless he possessed all the information. This was not to say he lacked intelligence. Far from it. What he lacked was any real sense of self worth or true independence. These character flaws all began to permanently manifest themselves that horrible May and were always lurking beneath his surface. His relationship with others never was what it might have been. And his blind faith in others led to critical mistakes and misjudgments that would have disastrous consequences. So what was different?

This new Harry's hope in a brighter future might just have been rewarded. Should this progression of event continue, this Harry would be very different than the last one and hopefully it would be for the better. Only one roadblock remained. This Harry could never be returned to his relatives. That would destroy him almost as assuredly as that May destroyed the last one. Sensei had little doubt that the Dursleys were in for a time, but he could not discount the ability of another to ruin this boy's renewed hope and blossoming sense of self worth. This was certainly a time where Sensei regretted his nature and inability to physically intervene in this world.

The door opened and two adults entered. They were not dressed as medical staff and Harry's grip on Hermione's hand tightened instinctively. She gripped back, both to comfort him and to save her hand from being crushed.

"You must be Harry," the man said. "I see you've met our daughter."



“Mr. Granger?” Harry asked.

The man nodded with a smile. “Fair warning, my wife and I are dentists. As such, we don’t approve of children having sweets a lot. Just thought you should know that under the circumstances.”

“What circumstances?” Harry asked.

“Hermione has been pestering us...”

“Have not,” Hermione began.

“Oh really?” the woman who had to be Hermione’s mother said. “This boy has been all you could talk about for a week. Ever since we found him...”

“As in nearly ran him over with the car,” Hermione’s father added.

“Fine,” the woman said. “Hermione? You’ve been all but begging us to let him live with us.”

Hermione looked at Harry who looked back in shock, and a tiny bit of hope in his eyes.

“Well,” Mrs. Granger drawled, “last Sunday your father and I spoke with the Social Worker here at the hospital. Everything depended, of course, on Harry here waking up and giving evidence. I mean, his relatives would have him back unless he were to show that they were abusing him. The physical evidence was - er - obvious. But until yesterday, there was nothing anyone could do.

“Harry spoke with Nurse Gail yesterday. That cinched it. He is for now a Ward of the State and will most likely be sent into foster care once he’s released from hospital. Last Sunday your Father and I volunteered to become his foster parents. We just had a meeting with the Social Worker and we’ve been approved, pending completion of the paperwork.”

“Mummy!” Hermione squealed with delight.



"Now don't get your knickers in a bunch," Mr. Granger said, earning a glare from his wife. "It's up to Harry, really. 'Best interests of the child' they call it."

"Me?" Harry asked.

Mr. Granger nodded. "If you want, you can come and live with us when you are better. If not..."

"I'd love to, Sir! But..."

"But?" three voices asked.

"Hermione told me about her - um - special gift and..."

"That bothers you?" Mrs. Granger started.

"No," Harry shot back. "No! Not at all. Does it bother you?"

"I admit, we don't really understand it, Harry," Mrs. Granger replied. "But it does not bother us. She's our daughter. She would be special to us in any event. The idea that she may be unique, well..."

"She's not unique, Ma'am. Special, yes. But not unique in that way."

"What do you mean?"

"I have that gift as well, it seems."

"Really?"

Harry nodded.

"Oh, that's wonderful!" Mrs. Granger gushed. Harry was stunned. "She won't have to figure this out alone! This is wonderful! Isn't it, Robert?"

Mr. Granger simply smiled. "Harry," he said. "The offer stands. We would love you to become part of our unique little family."



Harry's eyes filled with tears. He was barely able to say what he said next. "I'd like that very much."

A/N: They got their approval awfully fast, but that will be explained.



## CHAPTER SIX: PUZZLES

SATURNDAY, MAY 14, 1988 - ST. BARTHOLOMEW'S  
CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL, LONDON, U.K.

The Avatar observed as Harry was welcomed into his new family. In minutes, the lonely boy had been the victim of more affection than he had ever remembered. He seemed both pleased and uncomfortable with it all. The Avatar was not surprised at this. In another timeline, Harry needed years before he could feel even slightly comfortable with being hugged and kissed. He had put up with it, but it was years before he became used to it and even then, deep down it still bothered him. This Harry seemed to relax fairly quickly.

He felt his initial insight into this new Harry may prove correct. The Avatar searched his own memories and soon realized for certain that the "vacation" that had led to the darkest time in the boy's life in the other timeline was a turning point that now seemed to have been avoided. He was supposed to advance a grade ahead of his peers. Instead, he was held back with his cousin, who had barely managed to advance. The day he had been found by the Grangers may have been a key event day, one which would avoid damage that had occurred in the other timeline. Maybe this Harry would not suffer the social problems the other Harry had. That would be a good thing, because the social problems the other Harry had developed in the coming years made him cannon fodder in the Old Man's plans and would lead to the end of the world.

The Avatar watched as this Harry and Hermione talked eagerly of books and music. Hermione, it seems, had been taking violin lessons and they talked about music they might one day play together. The whole time, they never let go of each other's hand. They were two children starved for friendship and they were eating it up. The parents had left telling the children that they were going shopping. They trusted their daughter not to wander off and they seemed to trust Harry as well. The Avatar watched as the hospital staff served them both a lunch - in Harry's case he was ordered to stuff himself. With the lunch over, they were now talking about school, each excited that they might be classmates in the same school.



The Avatar decided to make an appearance, although he was almost certain only Harry would be able to see him. He positioned himself so that Harry would see him but Hermione would not then began to appear from the nothingness. He was amused at Harry's reaction. Harry's eyes went wide and mouth dropped open. Apparently, Hermione saw this and turned to look.

Her eyes narrowed and she seemed to position herself as if to protect Harry. "Who are you?" she snapped.

"What are you?" Harry added in shock. "He just appeared out of nowhere."

The Avatar was surprised Hermione could see him, but it was a welcome development. He smiled. "I can assure you, Hermione, I am not one of Harry's vile relatives. Harry and I first met last Saturday, not long before you made his acquaintance."

Hermione looked at Harry who nodded. "How do you know my name?" she asked.

"Ah questions. Harry had a fair few last night when I visited and I promised him I would begin to answer them, but also warned him, the answers will take time. Suffices to say, Hermione, I know a lot about you, just as I know a lot about Harry.

"You are Hermione Jane Granger, born September 19th, 1979 in London to Robert and Rose Granger, a pair of dentists. You live in Loughton Essex and I believe you attend St. Michaels School not two blocks from this hospital, right?"

Hermione looked stunned.

"And your friend here is Harry James Potter, born July 31st, 1980 in Godrics Hollow, Devonshire to James Tiberius Potter and Lily Marie (Evans) Potter. His parents were murdered on October 31st, 1981..."

"Murdered?" Harry asked.



“Murdered. I can assure you they were not what your Aunt says they were. Anyway, Harry was sent to live with his mother’s sister, Petunia who was married to a brutal man named Vernon Dursley. He lived at Number 4 Privet Drive, Little Whinging, Surrey. It was not a pleasant life.”

“No,” Harry said frowning, “it was not.”

The Avatar laughed at a thought. “I bet the two of you did not know you both have the first two initials? H.J.? I had always thought it would have been amusing if you two had married. Same initials, see? H.J.P. Could have monogrammed everything and only the two of you would truly know whether the H.J. stood for Harry, Hermione or both. Lovely prank it would have been.”

“Married,” Hermione squeaked. “What are you talking about? Why are you talking about us in the past? What’s with the riddles?”

“Not riddles,” the Avatar said. “Puzzles. A riddle has all the information needed to answer it contained within the riddle itself. A puzzle is missing information. A riddle does not encourage a person to learn, rather it tests how clever they are. A puzzle encourages questions which leads to learning. Much more interesting things, puzzles.”

“What are you on about?” Harry asked.

“Today I shall answer two of your questions. In so doing, I’ll probably answer many more. Those two questions are what am I and who am I. We will begin with the what. Hermione, may I shake your hand?”

Hermione nodded cautiously. The Old Man walked up and extended his hand. Hermione reached out for it and her hand simply passed through his as if it was not there. She gasped.

“Are you a ghost?” she asked.

The Old Man laughed. “No Hermione, I most certainly am not a ghost. A ghost is the disembodied spirit or essence of a person who has passed away that, for reasons known only to it, has not chosen to



move on from this world and just lingers. To be a ghost, I must be both a spirit and I must have both lived and died. I certainly exist. But I am no spirit and I have never had a physical body. What you see is not matter, but energy. I am perhaps unique. The best word to describe what I am is an Avatar.”

“What’s that?” Hermione asked.

“Indeed,” the Old Man chuckled. “The word has two meanings, both of which are applicable. The word Avatar comes from the ancient language of Sanskrit. It refers to a spirit being from a higher plane of existence sent to this plane to perform a specific task. In western mythos, the most analogous being is an angel, or more specifically a guardian angel.

“An Avatar also refers to the digital representation of a player in a computer game. It is the extension of a human into the digital world and is under the control of the player.

“To at least some extent, I am both and neither. I was created by a man and what you see before you is that man. I have all of his memories, thoughts and learning. I have his feelings and, I dare say, probably some of his more annoying personality quirks. He sent me here because he needs to do something and cannot do it himself. He is both me and not me. I knew him as my Creator. He called himself the Curator. I am his Avatar, yet I am me at the same time. I have been sent here because of Harry.”

“What? Me? Why?” Harry asked.

“We’ll get there, don’t you worry Harry. Don’t tell me you read the last chapter of a book to see how it ends before you get there.”

“I - I don’t.”

“All in good time. Now. Where was I?”

“You’re here because of Harry,” Hermione said.

The old man chuckled. “You always did pay attention in class.”



“Again with the past!”

“Getting there,” the Old Man grinned. “As you could tell earlier when you could not touch me, I cannot interact with this world in the physical sense. As such I must act through another. I was designed so that only a few people could ever see or hear me. The critical one was my Creator.”

The Old Man stopped talking and let the two think about that for a while. Both seemed to begin to understand but not believe what he was implying. Finally Hermione spoke.

“But - but that means...” she began.

The two children watched as the old man began to transform before their very eyes. He seemed to get younger by the second. Old, then middle aged, then a young man, a teenager and finally, a boy. A seven year old boy who was the spitting image of Harry.

After a long stunned silence, Harry spoke. “I created you? That’s can’t be!”

“Right now, you are correct,” the new boy said. “But one hundred and sixty-one years from now and after almost one hundred years of trying? Yes Harry. I am you - or at least one possible you.”

“A different plane of existence,” Hermione said, “sent to perform a task. You’re from the future! But that’s impossible!”

“I am indeed from A future,” the Old Man said. “My being here is proof that it’s not impossible. Nothing is impossible, merely improbable. In a few years, scientists studying quantum theory will show that to be the case, assuming they have not done so already. I am one form of Harry Potter. Until last Saturday, he and I were identical. I experienced everything he had up to that date. I experienced every beating, every humiliation, every deprivation he had suffered at the hands of the Dursleys. But, last Saturday, he became a different Harry Potter.”



“How can this be possible?” Hermione said.

“I don’t believe you,” Harry added.

The Old Man then began to recount all of Harry’s memories. Hermione sat there in shock watching Harry as his expressions confirmed every beating, every humiliation. The fact he had not even known his real name until he went to school for the first time brought her to tears. Harry was soon in tears as well. The Old Man described everything, right up until the point where he met Harry at the library. He stopped talking and allowed the children to recover.

“Until last Saturday Harry,” the Old Man said, “I was you and you were me. You see that now, don’t you?”

Harry nodded. He never told anyone what the Old Man had said and it was all true. “Wh-what happened?”

“In my timeline, Harry, I went to the library to continue reading the Fellowship of the Ring. Unlike you, no old man came up to me and engaged me in conversation. I finished my chapter, noted it on my notepad for later and left. I made it back to Privet Drive and collapsed just inside the door. I came to about a week later. What food there was in the house had spoiled and I had no money. I did the only thing I could think of. I went to Mrs. Figg. She fed me and a friend of hers fixed me up. I then returned to the Dursleys.

“I would meet my best friend Hermione one day. We seemed destined to meet. But it would not be now. My Hermione and I met in the fall of 1991. When I saw that it was Hermione and her parents that saved you the other day, I wondered whether that was a coincidence. I don’t believe in destiny and similar nonsense, but now? Maybe you two were destined to meet and become friends.

“I was sent here to change the future. Not just my future or Hermione’s, although I do hope for your sakes that is true. No. If it was only your lives, I would not have bothered. But there’s far more at stake and you, Harry, are the Keystone. You do not create the hell the world becomes, but had you been prepared, you are the only one



who can prevent it. That is why I am here. I am here to help you save the human race from its own extinction.”

“How am I supposed to do that?” Harry asked in shock.

“Wait a minute,” Hermione said, “you’re here to change history?”

“Hope so,” the Old Man said.

“But that’s wrong! That’s evil! That’s…”

“I would agree with you, Hermione. Done for selfish reasons you are right. Moreover - Harry? You remember our conversation about Chaos Theory?”

“You can’t know what might happen,” Harry said.

“Indeed,” the Old Man replied. “Any change in the timeline cannot be predicted. I have already changed it. You and Hermione were not to meet for another three years. Your abuse would not be noticed, Harry. Now it is and you will never live with the Dursleys again. I was sent back to prevent a disaster of such monumental proportions. This is far beyond making my former life better, or Hermione’s. Her life in my timeline, well... It’s probably better now, Hermione.

“Anyway, were we talking about just the two of you, I would never have come back. For the whole human race, however, that’s different. I came back to save humanity. I hope in so doing I will make your new lives far better than they were in my timeline. And no, Harry, you are not expected to do anything for some time. Nor you, Hermione.”

“Still,” Hermione protested, “you might make things worse. We might make things worse.”

“How can it possibly get any worse,” the Old man complained. “In about eighty years, what’s left of the human race will be wiped out in the second nuclear war. Fifty-eight years from now, most everyone I know dies in the first nuclear war. There is no worse case scenario as the worst case is precisely what will happen if events unfold as they did in my timeline. Anything less than the extermination of mankind is



an improvement. Hopefully, the changes will prevent even the less bloody of the wars.”

“Given the choice, Hermione,” Harry said, “maybe it is worth trying.”

“How can we be sure of this, Harry? It’s so - weird.”

“And so is Sensei,” Harry began.

“Who?”

“That’s what future me told me to call him,” Harry said. “It means ‘teacher.’”

“And you may call me that too, Hermione,” Sensei said. “My primary task was to teach you and Harry what you need to know so that when the time is right you will not make the mistakes my Hermione and I made. Those mistakes were based upon lack of information, not lack of skill, desire, planning or effort. It is the information gap - and other things - that I have been sent to help you with.”

“So what did you and your Hermione do wrong?” Hermione asked.

“We will get to that. I regret I cannot teach you everything in one day. The plan called for years of instruction before the first critical juncture was reached. Now, it seems, we have even more years and more opportunities to avoid that juncture altogether.”

“More years?”

Sensei nodded. “The - er - device that allowed me to come to Harry from my future self had - er - limitations. We could ensure it was accurate to within meters of a specific location in the past, or actuate to within minutes of a specific time in the past, but not both. The system was subject to Heisenberg’s Uncertainty Principal - a theory that states you can mathematically determine where something is or what it is doing, but you cannot do both. We decided that temporal accuracy was not as important as geographic accuracy. Our target time of arrival was July 1st, 1995 - over seven years from now. We



deliberately erred on the side of arriving before that date rather than after.”

“Why that date?” Hermione asked.

“I regret, that lesson is for another day, Hermione,” Sensei replied. “You will be told, however.”

Hermione pouted.

“I know you hate not knowing, Hermione,” Sensei said. “But there really is a lot of material the two of you will need to learn. As I said, the information alone may take years to teach. And, as I will tell you later, I am here to teach more than just information. I will be teaching you skills you will need in the years to come. Even if the timeline changes, these skills will be useful to you in any event. These skills also will take years to learn and master. I only ask a few things from both of you.”

“What things?” Harry asked.

“First and foremost, I ask for your patience and for you to try as hard as you can.”

They nodded.

“Second, you must trust each other. You must promise never to have a secret from the other. Do not be afraid of what the other might think if you have something you need or want to tell them. I know you two will always be the best of friends and that nothing will ever change that. So trust each other.

“Third, everything I am teaching you is a secret. You cannot tell anyone else about any of it. Some they may figure out on their own, but you may not reveal how you know the things I teach you. There may come a day when Harry trusts someone else enough that they can see me. When that day comes, you can decide what to tell them and what not to. But, you can only tell people who can see me.



“Fourth, I may ask you to do some things that don’t make a lot of sense. I will try to explain. If for some reason I cannot, I want you to trust me. I am not going to ask you to do anything dangerous - at least not until I am sure you are ready and will be safe.

“Can you agree to this?”

“Yes Sensei,” the two children said in unison.

“Good. I have got one more thing to tell you before I leave you for today. I will see you again tomorrow and we’ll cover more ground. Between now and then, I will leave you with a little homework...”

The two children actually smiled. “Nothing too fancy. I just want you two to think about what I’ve told you today. You may talk to each other about it. Tomorrow, you may ask questions about it. To the extent that I missed something I should have told you today, I will make up for my glaring omissions tomorrow.

“Finally, I want you to know that I cannot see the true future ahead - only the signs that the fate suffered in my timeline remains probable. That being said, I have given much thought as to why I returned at the time that I did. At first, I thought it was random chance. Now I am not so sure.”

Sensei remained silent for a moment.

“As I told you earlier, Harry and I lived the same life right up until the point Harry met me in the library last Saturday. Harry?”

“Yes Sensei?”

“Thursday, before you were injured, you had a meeting with your teacher Ms. Johnson, right?”

“Yes. She said I could probably skip third form altogether and move right on to fourth.”

Sensei nodded. “I had the same talk with her in my time. What else did she tell you?”



“That I am way ahead in reading and writing but will probably have to study math over the summer - possibly in summer school. She said I was the brightest in my class and she felt keeping me with my class was not in my best interests. I’d probably become bored, she said, and might lose interest in my studies.”

Sensei nodded. “Me too. Except in my case, as you know, I did not get to live with Hermione’s family. I was stuck with the Dursleys who were not about to let me advance faster than their thickheaded son. They also were furious when they learned I was at the top of my class and Dudley was at the bottom. They made it clear to me that it was unacceptable.

“Like you, I loved reading. I loved learning new things. I also loved being the best in my class. The Dursleys took away my reading and made it clear I had to do worse than Dudley. As a result, I lost interest in learning. It was not until after I met my Hermione when that began to change, but it took time. Too much time, really. I never learned the critical reasoning skills I would need until it was too late. Had I learned those skills - and I would have if I had not lost my interest in learning - well, I probably would not be here. I will tell you why later.

“When your parents return, Hermione, I want you and Harry to try and convince them that Harry should skip third form. Would you like to do that, Harry?”

“Yes Sensei, very much,” Harry said with a smile.

“You know you’ll probably have to finish your course work for this year.”

“I don’t mind. Seems I’m stuck here and would like something to do while I lie around waiting for Hermione and to get better.”

“And you may have to take summer school for the math.”

“I don’t mind. My summers were never all that fun before anyway.”

“Will you help him, Hermione?”



"I'd love to, Sensei!"

"Good. So now, remember your 'homework.' Think about what we've discussed and, more importantly, I want you to focus on trying to explain your special gifts. Okay?"

"We will," Hermione said as Harry nodded.

"See you sometime tomorrow," Sensei said as he faded into nothingness.

"You think Sensei is somehow connected to whatever it is that our special gifts are?" Harry asked.

"I think that's a logical conclusion," Hermione said. "So what are your thoughts?"

A/N: The term "Avatar" in our age - as in computer gaming - was first used around 1985.



## CHAPTER SEVEN: REVELATIONS

SATURDAY, MAY 14, 1988 - ST. BARTHOLOMEW'S CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL, LONDON, U.K.

Hermione and Harry had an hour after Sensei vanished to discuss what had just happened. They both spent most of the time lost in thought, occasionally stating an idea or posing a question to the other. Their musings, as brief as they were, were soon interrupted by the return of Hermione's parents. Sensei was forgotten for a while. The two children did relay Harry's academic hopes and the elder Grangers promised Harry that one of them would visit his school in Surrey to talk to his teachers about his skipping a year and his assignments for the rest of the term as, even when he was released from hospital, he could not hope to commute from Essex to his old school.

Harry, Hermione and her parents had dinner together that night for the first time. It was the first time Harry had been treated as a member of any family and not a servant. He enjoyed the experience immensely. The dinner conversation hit on one of his favorite subjects - books - and he eagerly shared with the others all of the books he had read and the one he was reading. He could tell that his foster parents were pleased.

Hermione could not help but smile. Her new friend - her first real friend - was a version of her. He loved learning and books perhaps as much as she did. He was less logical, she thought. He was far more open to strange ideas and stuff, but compared to all the other children her own age, he was the closest thing she had found to a kindred spirit.

Her parents asked him what else he liked. He told them about his piano lessons with Mrs. Figg, his neighbor and how he loved music. He also told them about the only chore at the Dursleys he actually enjoyed doing - cooking. They were appalled that a seven year old cooked, much less had to earn his keep, but Harry insisted he was both good at it, loved to learn more about it and enjoyed it - if for no other reason than that they usually left him alone when he was doing it.



Harry learned that Hermione was taking violin lessons and suggested that maybe they should work on a duet or something. He also learned - with a laugh - that she was forbidden from the kitchen. Hermione found herself blushing red as her mother complained about her inability to toast bread without setting off the smoke alarms, much less do anything else and she was slightly envious as Harry talked knowledgeably about cooking various dishes.

Her parents asked Harry what he would like to learn that he had not been able to yet. His answers shocked Hermione. He wanted to learn to swim. She knew how and could not believe he had never been swimming. He also wanted to learn to ride a bike - something she had been doing for a few years.

Around eight that evening, the Grangers had to leave for the day. With her parents looking on, Hermione kissed Harry on the cheek and he returned the favor. They both blushed furiously, given both the moment and the audience, then laughed as they said their good nights to each other. Each was eager for the next day together.

SUNDAY, MAY 15, 1988 - ST. BARTHOLOMEW'S CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL, LONDON, U.K.

At nine the next morning, Hermione came bursting into Harry's hospital room. He had finished his morning routine and was reading his book when she entered. Her arrival brought a large smile to his face, the largest Hermione had ever seen on him. She could not help but blush.

She told him that her parents were going to spend the day shopping for him and was surprised at how embarrassed he was.

"For what?" he asked.

"A bed, furniture for your room, a computer, CLOTHES," Hermione began.

"Hand-me-downs are fine. And my own room?"



"Of course your own room silly," Hermione laughed. "You don't honestly think we'd share the same room."

"I was fine in my cupboard," Harry said meekly.

"Harry, that was so wrong! We have plenty of room and you're going to have your own room. We have a guest room and a spare and there's no way we are going to make you sleep in a cupboard! As for clothes, you really want to wear my old skirts and dresses?"

"That probably would not be a good idea," Harry admitted, "sorry. They really should not have to though."

"Harry! Just 'cause your relatives are mean and evil to you does not mean there's anything wrong with you! You deserve a room and decent clothes to wear and far more as well."

"Thanks," Harry said with tears in his voice. "I always dreamed of an angel taking me away from that place and letting me be - normal. Thank you, Hermione Angel."

Hermione blushed furiously as tears filled her eyes. Was it like this for Sensei and his Hermione, she wondered? It couldn't have been. This was too perfect!

"You're welcome, My Prince," she said. She was rewarded by a red faced Harry.

Harry blushed as well. Thus began their blushing game - played in private, the goal was to make the other blush. They almost always ended in a draw - as in they almost never failed when playing to make the other blush.

They spend the rest of the morning on their "homework," mainly trying to put a word to their special gifts. In the end, Harry came up with a word. It annoyed Hermione to no end as there was no real proof to it, but she lacked any counter word or proof that it was otherwise. They agreed he would use the word if and when Sensei reappeared.



It was afternoon and the two children were reading their books when a dull light in the room caused them to look up. This time, they both witnessed Sensei's arrival out of thin air. By now, however, neither was surprised at such a strange event.

"Good afternoon, Sensei," they both said.

He actually laughed. "I know I'm old but do you have to make me sound like one of my professors from oh so long ago?"

The two children said nothing, not knowing how to respond.

"Very good," Sensei said. "If you cannot think of something intelligent to say, it's best to say nothing. There is a corollary as well: it is better to sit in silence and let people think you're an idiot than open your mouth and remove all doubt. Something else you should think about. Sometimes it is far better not to let others know just how smart you really are. Something I want the two of you to consider.

"Anyway, did you two do your homework?"

The two nodded.

"So tell me, what ideas have you come up with regarding your special gifts?"

"You don't want an answer?" Hermione asked.

"Answer means you are certain. Not everything is certain or can be certain in life, Hermione. Sometimes certainty is never possible. Most times it cannot be attained due to a lack of adequate information. So, instead of an answer, you put forward your best idea. So again, what is your idea?"

Hermione looked at Harry who answered meekly. "Magic?"

Sensei smiled. "Precisely!"

"What?" Hermione exclaimed! "Magic? It's real?"



“Can you or did you come up with any other logical explanation?”

“Well no, but surely...”

“Well all other probable explanations are ruled out, the one remaining, however improbable, must be the truth, Hermione. There is no other logical explanation as to how Harry grew his hair back the other day or how you caught on fire and did not burn. Magic is real.”

“Then how come nobody believes it is?” Hermione asked.

“The ability of a person to express magic to the degree you two can is exceptionally rare. Maybe one in 800 people can express magic, that is use magic to affect the world around them. It may even be less than that.”

“What is magic?” Harry asked.

“Exceptional question,” Sensei said. “Funny thing is, those of us who are magical, known as wizards and witches - and yes you two are a wizard and witch - well, we as a society always accepted magic as a given. Never really studied what it is and how it fits within the laws of nature. Perhaps if we had long ago...” Sensei seemed to become lost in thought. He finally blinked. “But we didn’t. We never studied it the way non-magicals study the world and universe around them. We only really will begin a couple of decades from now or so - too late to change things.

“What I can tell you is magic is natural. It is a form of energy or a force and is found at least to some degree in every living thing. For lack of a better word, it is the spark of life.

“Non-magical scientists have tried to create life from lifelessness for centuries. Most recently, their knowledge of molecular chemistry has reached a level where they can make all of the chemical building blocks for life. They have a good idea of the solutions and reactions that are needed to allow those blocks to assemble into amino acids, proteins and other complex molecular compounds common to all life. Yet nothing ever happens. Something is always missing - what we call magic.



"There are four forces known to non-magical science. One is gravity. You know what that is?"

"It's what makes things fall," Harry said.

"Correct. Very complex thing gravity. For centuries it was believed to be an attractive force like a magnet, but it's not. A man named Einstein proved it was a warp in the fabric of space and time caused by a mass or matter, not unlike a ditch. It does not attract you to the surface, you fall into the surface.

"Another kind of force is electromagnetic force. This includes magnetism, light, radio waves and electricity. All are related to one another.

"The other two forces known to science are the two nuclear forces which bind the smallest particles of matter together.

"Magic is the fifth force. It was known to the non-magical world centuries ago. Witches and wizards were once important members of the larger community. They healed the sick and helped prevent famine and advised the rulers of their world. In Europe, the role of the true magician fell out of favor with the rise of Christianity. We became less and less important. Prayer took over for magic and soon we were falsely accused of being heretics or worse. By the ninth century, our world had become largely, but not completely hidden from the rest of the world."

"Why?" Hermione asked.

"Our fault, mostly," Sensei said. "True, the religious fanatics had a share hunting witches as such. But in reality, as bloody as the witch hunts were, they almost never caught a real witch who did not want to be caught. The witch hunts were more about persecuting women than magic. Still, we saw it as a sign of psychotic animosity towards our kind. The crises point came in the late seventeenth century. Although the witch hunts had largely died down, they still occurred. Our kind had a new fear - technology. By the late seventeenth



century firearms were both reliable and plentiful in the non-magical world and no magic has ever been created that can stop a bullet.

“To preserve our world, the European witches and wizards enacted an International treaty. Magic was now secret and we were all tasked with keeping the secret. Law after law was passed to make sure no non-magical person would accidentally learn of our existence or be able to find us if they tried.”

“So no one in the non-magical world knows about magic?” Harry asked.

“It really is a stupid law,” Sensei said. “It’s riddled with exceptions. For example: a third of all witches and wizards born today have no magical parents. They are called Muggle-Borns; Muggle being a term used to describe non-magical people and their world. Personally, I think it is a slur. But as we sit here today, every witch or wizard uses it.

“Only about ten percent of witches and wizards can call themselves Purebloods; that is their parents, grandparents, great-grandparents and great-great grandparents were witches and wizards. The term Pureblood is almost as offensive as Muggle in my book. It’s like the term Aryan. Those who use it with pride are supremacists, bigots or worse. In other words, not very nice people.

“The remainder of all witches and wizards are called Half-Bloods meaning they have a parent, grand-parent, or great or great-great grandparents who was not magical. In our world a non-magical heritage is the norm and not the exception as the Pureblood Supremacists wish to believe.

“There is a fourth category of person within the magical world. Magicals call them Squibs. They are children of magical parents without magical ability. Their treatment by many - including their own families - is abominable! While Harry may have been better off being born a Squib than living with the Dursleys, he would not have been that much better off.”



“But despite the secrecy, there are non-magicals who know?” Hermione asked.

“A fair few,” Sensei said. “Probably, there are more non-magicals who know about us and that magic is real than there are magicals like us.”

“How so?”

“For one thing, it’s impossible to hide everything. Goodness knows we have tried. For another, as so many of us have non-magical parents or grandparents, they know. They know, their non-magical children usually know. There are others as well.”

“My parents don’t know,” Hermione said.

Sensei smiled. “Not yet, Hermione. They will. In about three years when you - and Harry - are eleven, you will be invited to attend Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry. It’s a boarding school for magical children where you will be taught magic. Your parents will be told at that time. Hogwarts is one of fourteen such schools in the British Isles and the only one that takes students from all over Britain and Ireland. Funny thing is, the secrecy laws being what they are, few witches and wizards know of any of the other schools until they are much older - usually after they leave school.”

“That’s silly,” Harry observed.

“Indeed,” Sensei agreed. “A lot of things in the magical world are. We hid ourselves for so long we might be considered somewhat backwards. We missed out on the industrial revolution and the rise of democracy and other things non-magicals take for granted. Many of our children have never seen a computer, much less used one. Same with the Telly and other technologies.

“Why would I want to live like that?” Hermione asked.

“There are many benefits to magic as well,” Sensei said. “What non-magicals do with technology, we do with magic. Not necessarily the same way, but similar. In some cases - most notably in medicine - our ways are much better than the non-magical counterpart. In other



cases - such as telecommunications, it's not. There are pros and cons to both ways and I really cannot say one is truly better than the other. In my opinion, a combination of the two is better than either - but that has never happened because of the secrecy laws."

"Will it be hard for us?" Hermione asked.

"Will what be hard?"

"Learning magic since we weren't raised to know about it."

"No, Hermione. It is no harder for you than for anyone and given how bright the two of you are, it may actually be easier."

"What about living in that world?" Harry asked.

"It is far easier for children like you to live as magicals and understand the magical world than it is for children raised in the magical world live as non-magicals or understand the non-magical world."

"So we may have an edge?" Hermione asked.

"I believe you do. Children from magical families may think otherwise - at least until they find they are not better than you are at magic simply because their parents were magical."

"Did my Aunt and Uncle know about magic?" Harry asked.

Sensei nodded. "You Mum and Dad were magical, Harry. Your Dad comes from a long line of witches and wizards, one of the oldest lines in Britain dating back to the days of Merlin and King Arthur."

"They were real?" Hermione asked.

"Quite real, Hermione."

"Then why the myths and such?"



“They lived at a time with few written records. Most writings chronicling their time was done by monks. Their libraries were either burned by the Vikings, the Normans or later during the Protestant Reformation so those records were lost to the world. Only some of the journals kept by the magical folk survived to this day.

“Any way, Harry, your Mum was a Muggle Born. Her parents were not magical at all.”

“And they weren’t drunks?”

“No Harry, they were not. Your parents were at the top of their class at Hogwarts - Head Boy and Head Girl. When they finished they became Aurors - similar to MI-5 and MI-6 in the non-magical world. They fought the enemies of our way of life. There was a war in our world back then. While most witches and wizards are good people, there were and are some who are evil - just like in the non-magical world. One of the most evil wizards was trying to take over and your parents fought against them. They were quite brave I was told.”

“And they didn’t die in a car crash?”

“No Harry, they did not. The war was going badly for the good witches and wizards. Not long before you were born, your parents were told that the evil wizard wanted to kill you.”

“Me? Why?”

“Later, Harry. That story is for another day.”

“But...”

“Remember, Harry, I cannot tell you everything at once. In part that it because you need to learn more before it can make sense and in part because it would take days and days or more.

“Suffices to say, for some reason, Lord Voldemort...”

“Who?” Hermione asked.



"That's what the evil wizard called himself."

"Was he a Lord?" Harry asked.

"He was as much a Lord as you are heir to the throne of England, Harry. He was a liar, a nutter, a cheat, a murderer - and those were his better qualities.

"Anyway, Voldemort decided you were some kind of threat to him and set out to kill you, Harry. Your parents got wind of this and went into hiding. But, they were betrayed by someone they thought was a friend - although not the person everyone blames - and Voldemort found you. He killed your father. Your mother tried to save you and he killed her. He then tried to kill you - and he never had failed to kill anyone before."

"But I didn't die."

"No Harry. You did not. Your mother's sacrifice protected you with very powerful magic. His curse that had never failed him in the past, blew up in his face. He was destroyed and all you have is that scar over your forehead."

"So he's dead then?"

"No Harry. He was protected by very evil magic. He lacks a physical form for now, but he is not dead and may come back."

"And try to kill me?"

"It would probably be on his list of things to do, yes Harry."

"But he didn't, did he?"

"No Harry, he did not. I destroyed him about eleven years from now. We thought I had killed him, but just like before, he survived. I would kill him in the end, about thirty-four years from now, but by then the events leading to the end of the world had become unstoppable."

"So you came back to help me beat him sooner?"



Sensei nodded. "Among other things."

"That's horrible!" Hermione said. "After all Harry's been through? We're just kids, Sensei!"

"Hermione," Sensei said softly, "you are and yes it is horrible. But do not think you are going out to save the world tomorrow or next week or next year. Remember, I was originally shooting for July 1st, 1995 - seven years from now. That was when your training must begin. The first crisis point is the following year and that will not require much effort on your part to change the course of history significantly. You have a long time before you have to take on this burden."

"And how do I fit in?" Hermione asked.

"My Hermione was with me the whole way," Sensei said. "This is not a task I or Harry could do alone. You, I hope, will help him."

Hermione nodded.

"I can assure you both that I am here because Harry must face this someday. There will be others who try to help, Harry. They failed you in my timeline but not for want of effort. I was ill prepared when I was all but thrown into a mess I never wanted a part of and it was like not doing your homework all year and trying to catch up in the last two weeks before the summer. Had I been better prepared eight years from now when the first true crisis point is reached, things would have turned out much differently. I am here to see to it that you are not as blind as I was, either of you."

"This is a lot of stuff," Harry began.

"Indeed," Sensei said. "Now you see why I will not answer all your questions at once?"

The two nodded.

"For now, we covered the fact that magic exists, that you are both magical, and that Harry has a nutter after him who wants him dead



but that the nutter is unable to do anything about it for now. Over the coming weeks, months and years, I will teach the two of you all I can to help you. While Harry is here in hospital, it will merely be discussions like this. Once Harry is healthy, I can begin to help you learn magic. We will discuss that in more detail the next time we meet.

“For now, I want you to focus on your non-magical studies, Hermione. You too, Harry. Once your school year is over, we can focus on other things. Okay?”

The two nodded.

“Good. Now I shall beg my leave. I might pop by sometime during the week when you are both here. But our next true lesson will be next Saturday. For homework, I want you both to practice something for me, okay?”

“Magic?” Harry asked with some enthusiasm.

“It will be one day, Harry. Each night between now and Saturday, before you drift off to sleep, I want both of you to try and clear your heads of any thoughts whatsoever. Focus on something simple in your minds, like creating a simple picture. Do this until you fall off to sleep.”

“Is it important?” Hermione asked.

Sensei nodded. “It is a form of meditation technique that will help you master things most witches and wizards never master. It is just the start, but it is something you can work on now, even at your young ages. Will you try?”

“Yes Sensei,” they both said.

“And remember your promise, you two. What we discuss is a secret between us. You cannot tell anyone - at least not until they can see me too. Okay?”

“Yes Sensei,” they said.



"Until then," Sensei said. He then faded away.

"What are you thinking, Harry?" Hermione asked after a long pause.

"I - I don't know what to think," Harry said. "I mean magic? Us being magical? That sounds pretty cool. But the other stuff?"

"Scary," Hermione said. "Why Harry?" She said with tears in her voice.

"H-Hermione?"

"You've had enough bad in your life? Why this? Haven't you suffered enough? Why?"

"I - I don't know."

"It's not fair! None of this is fair!"

Harry shrugged. "Could be worse."

"How?"

"I could have never met you. I could be still with the Dursleys. I could have the few things I actually like taken away - school, books, and you. I could have to face that nutter today."

"Still."

"Hermione, these last couple of days have still been the best I can remember even if they are so weird. I have a friend. I never had one before. She's pretty too."

"You think that?"

Harry nodded.

"Aside from Mum and Dad, no one ever said that about me before."

"They are stupid then."



"Thanks Harry," she said with a smile.

"Besides, Hermione, you heard Sensei. He's going to teach us. He said he was not prepared when he had to go through it in his timeline. Neither was his Hermione. You and I will be ready if the time comes."

"If?"

"Sensei said he didn't meet his Hermione for another three years. I met mine now. He had to stay with the Dursleys and I get to live with your family. Who knows? Maybe that's enough to change things."

"Maybe. But what if it's not enough?"

"He says we have eight years before we need to worry about that. That's longer than I've been alive."

"Still."

"It's a long time. We will be ready."

"You scared?"

"A little. I'm more scared about you. It sounds dangerous."

"It's cause I'm a girl, isn't it." She said sounding hurt.

"No. No Hermione it's not. It's because you're my friend and I don't want you to get hurt because of this."

"I'm not going to let you do this alone."

Harry thought about that for a long time.

"Harry?"

"I don't think I can do it alone, if I have to. I'm glad you want to help me. Thank you."

"That's what friends are for, right?"



“I suppose. Thanks. I’m glad you want to be my friend.”

“Me too.”



## CHAPTER EIGHT: THE STRANGE NEW WORLD

SATURDAY, MAY 21, 1988 - ST. BARTHOLOMEW'S CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL, LONDON, U.K.

The week passed quickly it seemed. The Grangers agreed to check with Harry's school both about his assignments and about whether he could advance a year and what he might need to do to do so. Harry had his school books. They were in a book bag he was carrying when the Grangers found him on the street.

His teacher had a meeting with Mrs. Granger. Harry's teacher was unaware of his abusive home life. True, Harry seemed to miss a lot of classes, but he always seemed fine, if ill dressed when he returned and his school work was exceptional. In her experience, abused children underperformed at school so she never suspected anything. Mrs. Granger noted that the young woman was furious to learn of Harry's situation. She sent on Harry's assignments so he could finish out the year and told Mrs. Granger that if Harry took an intensive math class over the summer, he should be able to skip a year.

Hermione was impressed with his school work when she saw it. By the end of the week, Harry had caught up on all the classes he missed and was actually over a week ahead in all his classes. He was thorough and meticulous, determined to set high goals for himself and eager to finish early so he could get back to his book. It was going to be fun having Harry as a friend, she thought. Finally, someone I can relate to!

They hadn't seen Sensei all week. Then again, he had said they needed to focus on their school work. The two were working on his assignment as well, although they did not know what it was for. Harry did admit later in the week that his nightmares seemed to be less intense than before. Hermione admitted she was sleeping better too.

Saturday, Hermione arrived at nine as she did the week before. Her parents stopped by and visited for a time but then left the two alone to do more shopping. To be honest, Harry liked it when the Grangers were around. They seemed to try to make him feel comfortable, liked, maybe even loved and encouraged him in his school work. After



lunch Hermione was reading while Harry was pushing forward on his assignments. He told Hermione he hoped to finish the year before he left hospital so when he left he could get the math course out of the way as soon as possible. The Grangers had told him they were going on holiday in August to America and Harry would be coming with them. Harry did not want to be having to study during the trip.

Sensei finally appeared about a half an hour after lunch.

"Good afternoon," he said.

"Good afternoon, Sensei," the two children replied.

"Dumped a lot on both of you last weekend, didn't I?" Sensei said.

They both nodded.

"I apologize. There was no easy way to do it. Still. You've had a week to think about it."

"Magic is real?" Harry said.

"Indeed."

"That's pretty cool, you know."

"Yeah," Hermione agreed, "especially that we might be able to do it."

"Might?" Sensei asked. "Hermione, both you and Harry will be brilliant at it. But something is bothering you."

They nodded. They both did not like the idea of evil wizards or that they might have to face one. Sensei seemed to understand.

"And how do you think I felt - or my Hermione? We weren't thrilled either. And we knew nothing about magic or Voldemort before we arrived at school. We certainly had no prior training and the training we did get was - lacking. You need to learn magic that is not taught at that school. And that was the reason for your homework. Did you do it?"



They both nodded.

“Let’s see then. Close your eyes and clear your minds.”

Several minutes passed before Sensei spoke again. “Good! Very good! Both of you!”

The two smiled but then Hermione asked: “Why are we doing this?”

“Mental discipline. Ninety percent or more of all magic succeeds or fails because of one’s degree of mental discipline. Why they don’t teach that I have no idea. If you can control your mind, you can control your magic with far greater ease. Makes learning magic much easier and quicker. I guess they figure young people can’t do that.” Sensei shrugged. “Obviously, they are mistaken.

“Now, starting tonight after you have cleared your minds I want you to imagine a safe place. Imagine a place where nothing can harm you. It can be real or imaginary. But focus on it, see it and believe in it before you go to sleep. Okay?”

They nodded.

“I will remind you of your assignment before I leave. Now, today’s lesson:

“To understand our present and the future I suffered, we must look to the past. I don’t claim to be an expert in history. Didn’t do well in school in that subject at all. Then again, my history professor was as boring as you can ever imagine. Seems only my Hermione could avoid falling asleep in his classes. His text was horrible and woefully inaccurate in places. Still, had I tried to pay attention, maybe I would have seen that and done my own research. Came to learn it later in life.

“Magic has been around forever so far as we are concerned. For thousands of years, people like us were an important part of human society. The magical peoples can be divided into two broad categories: wand users and non-wand users. A wand is a tool that



allows a magical to focus their magical energy with greater ease and precision. It makes learning magic easier, but it is also a crutch. Most wand users never learn wandless magic.

“Wand use is a Roman invention. The Britons and Celts were not wand users. It was only when they and their peoples were conquered by the Roman legions that they took up the wand as well.”

“What is a wand?” Hermione asked.

“Ah! Good question. A wand is a very important tool. It is a milled piece of wood - wood with magical properties and each has a core with a magical substance. Here, our wandmakers tend to use magical woods from trees representing the Celtic calendar: Birch, Rowan, Ash, Alder, Willow, Hawthorn, Oak - usually White Oak, Holly, Hazel, Vine, Ivy, Reed and Elder. Each wood is associated with a Celtic month and usually your wand will be made from that wood associated with your birth month, but not always. In your cases that would be Holly for Harry and Vine for you Hermione.

“Most magical cores are taken from a magical creature. The most common are: Dragon parts, Unicorn Hair, Hippogriff feathers and fire salamander scale. Rarer are such items as Phoenix feathers and Griffin hair. There are others as well and each wand maker has their own preference for core materials.”

“They’re real?” Hermione asked. “Dragons and such?”

“Rare but yes, quite real.

“A wand allows you to focus your magic with greater ease. As I said, for the vast majority it is a crutch. All magicals are capable of wandless magic. Both of you have done it. Wands are easier so most never learn to control their magic without one. The mental exercises I have assigned you will help you learn wandless magic. True, for some magic wands are essential and you will learn that magic at school. But for our purposes, wandless is more convenient.”

“Why?” they asked.



“First off, you cannot have a wand until the July before you start Hogwarts. It’s illegal to sell a wand to you and technically illegal for you to have one. Secondly, the government has a law that prohibits underage magicals from doing magic outside of a magical school. They say they can detect any underage magic use but that’s a load of rubbish. They can, however, detect wand use. Each wand has a unique signature that can be detected and each wand is registered with the government. Use a wand outside of school before your turn seventeen and you’ll get a nasty note inviting you to a hearing.

“They can only detect wandless magic if the location is under specific surveillance by the government. Privet Drive was at one point after I started school. Most places are not. From what I understand, it’s bloody expensive to set up the necessary detectors. Hermione’s place is not under surveillance and the laws regarding underage magic do not cover wandless magicals underage at all. Accidental magic, as they call it, is expected.”

“Sounds silly to me,” Hermione said. “Honestly! They don’t care when we can’t control magic, but they do when we’re learning how?”

“If you are expecting your average magical government type to be logical, Hermione, you’re in for a rude shock. Parliament makes more sense logically and that’s not saying much.

“Anyway,” Sensei continued, “for thousands of years the way you learned magic was to be apprenticed to a witch or wizard. Problem was, many never took on more than a handful of apprentices at any time. Even then, you were restricted in your learning by what your mentor knew. There were no standards and few books on the subject and some of the greatest witches and wizards had no use for apprentices. Merlin, perhaps the greatest of all time, never took on an apprentice.

“Prior to the tenth century magical education was haphazard at best. Many magical children - particularly those born to non-magical parents of little or no means - received no real training. Those who did receive training only learned what their patron decided to teach them. Some patrons were exceptional good teachers, most were not.



"In the early tenth century, there were four exceptionally accomplished magicals who had trained exceptional apprentices.

"One was Godric Gryffindor. He was the direct descendant of Sir Galahad of Camelot fame although not an heir as he was descended from the youngest son. Like his ancestor Gryffindor was both a Knight of the Realm and a wizard. He had learned both feat of arms and magic while serving as a Squire to his uncle.

"Salazar Slytherin was another. He had apprenticed as a potions maker in his youth and had an exceptional patron. The patron, however, was a Dark Wizard fascinated with Dark Magic. The real Slytherin learned that as well, but hated the evil it represented. He is, for all intents and purposes, the first true Auror and spent much of his life defeating Dark witches and wizards. He believed that it was necessary to understand dark magic in order to defeat it.

"Then there was the witch Rowena Ravenclaw. She was noble by birth and had received an education in a convent that, conveniently, had more than a fair few witches as nuns - something that was not uncommon at the time. She loved learning and books. In that regard, she was exceptional in that age. Most people were illiterate back then and women were almost universally so - outside a religious order.

"Finally, there was Helga Hufflepuff, a Muggle Born witch. She was entirely self taught as she came from a poor family who could not afford to set her up as an apprentice. Somewhere along the line, she too learned to read and write.

"These four were appalled at the state of magical education and set out to do something about it. They began by writing manuscripts on all of the magic they had learned with the help of their apprentices. Each looked for certain traits in their apprentices.

"Gryffindor, being a warrior and a knight sought apprentices who were brave and would uphold the codes of chivalry. Honor and courage were key in his mind. Slytherin preferred cunning students who were also pure of heart and thus unlikely to become evil. I want you to remember that point for it is a point that has been generally forgotten in our world and it is immensely important. Ravenclaw



preferred the smart and studious types. Finally, Hufflepuff favored hard working students who proved they were loyal to their friends.

“The four wanted to open a formal school to provide a standard education to all magical children in the British Isles regardless of wealth, social status or birth rights. They hoped for a location that was somewhat centralized, but at that time, England was not unified and nor was it truly safe for magicals. The Anglo-Saxons ruled much of England and the Danes - the Vikings - the rest. Ireland was divided into several warring kingdoms so it was not considered at all.

“Sometime between 950 and 980 A.D., the date is not certain, the four acquired a castle from a Scottish Laird who had a magical son. The names of those are lost to history as well. They opened Hogwarts during that time period and began admitting students from age eleven from all over. Most children did not attend at first. The student body was mostly Muggle Born as they seldom had an opportunity to apprentice with any witch or wizard. Each of the founders was in charge of a group of students. When a student first arrived, they were assigned to a founder based upon the traits each founder sought in their young charges. That school is the oldest school in all Britain excluding monasteries, convents and seminaries. That is the Hogwarts you will attend.

“Now, remember what I said about what Slytherin wanted in a student?”

“Cunning and pure of heart,” Hermione answered before Harry could even take a breath to reply.

“Precisely. The original journals of the founders were written in runes that represented the Gaelic language. The magical texts were in Latin. The key points of their journals were translated long after they died, first into Latin, then French and finally English. Whether on purpose or by accident, ‘pure of heart’ became what most in our world now believe was ‘pure of blood.’ In other words, most people think Slytherin was both Dark and felt that magic should only be taught to children from magical families. Both of which are false.



“The Purebloods support this lie with the legend that Slytherin left Hogwarts because he got into an argument with the other founders about teaching Muggle Borns. That’s not what happened. Slytherin’s young wife Cassiopia died giving birth to his youngest child. His heart was broken as the school was his wife’s passion as well. He could not bear to walk the halls that held memories of him with his wife in every corner.”

“But why hasn’t anyone bothered to correct that?” Harry asked. “I mean if it’s wrong...”

“Ah!,” Sensei laughed, “that is indeed the question for today! You see, in the Wizarding World most people believe what they read, particularly if it is old enough. While that’s fine when dealing with books about magic and its use, Wizarding history is another matter altogether. Most of what you read about our history is either exaggerated, incomplete, inaccurate or just plain false. It is a fatal flaw in our society.

“What you must understand is that most of the histories you can find in Britain were written in the last three or four centuries. The authors never truly researched their materials. All they did was copy or change what another had written. Few bother to seek out original materials from the time periods they are writing about. Thus their histories are plagued by their own personal beliefs, bias and prejudice.

“The first ‘History’ of our world was written in the mid-Fourteenth Century, perhaps four hundred years after the last of the founders passed away. The author never sought out the original journals that may have existed. He worked from a flawed translation that supported his view of his world - that magical heritage is everything. Virtually every history since has pressed this flawed agenda. Many Purebloods believe that they are the only magicals who should have any say in this world by virtue of their bloodlines.”

“That’s horrible!” Hermione said.

“At the time, it was in line with how non-magicals thought as well,” Sensei continued. “The King was at the top of the non-magical social



pyramid. Beneath him was a hereditary nobility whose titles and powers passed from father to son. Only the King could make a non-noble noble and this did not happen often. Even when a commoner was so elevated, they were looked down upon by the hereditary nobles as still being commoners. Commoners were beneath them all. Serfs, commoners bound to their Lord's land, were the lowest and had the least rights.

"While it never truly reached such a level of a class society in our world, it was and is close. Many Purebloods believe that they are and should be the sole group with authority to govern. To preserve their 'purity,' most of their children are bound to arranged marriages - in other words they marry who their parents tell them to marry regardless of how they actually feel. It was a practice in Muggle society that has died out.

"Those Purebloods who do not follow this agenda or believe in their superiority are known as Blood Traitors to the bigoted elitists. Despite that, The elitists are not above offering their daughters in marriage to a Blood Traitor provided that the Blood Traitor is either rich or influential. Blood Traitors is a term used to describe a Pureblood witch or wizard who does not follow Pureblood ways. They'll even stoop to trying to arrange marriages with Half-Bloods who they see as inferior to even the most ardent Blood Traitor."

"Hypocrisy," Hermione said.

"Exactly. The Pureblood elitists will spout their elitist agenda at every opportunity, unless there's a profit to be made or wealth or political power to be acquired.

"Now, at the bottom of this flawed social order are Muggle Borns. The Elitists despise them. There have been times when being Muggle Born practically shut you out of many professions aside from shopkeepers and merchants. It's not so bad today, but the animosity remains and a change in the composition of the government to a less accepting majority will result in laws depriving Muggle Borns of many opportunities. For the Pureblood elitists, non-magicals are not even viewed as human."



“That’s stupid!” Hermione said.

Sensei nodded. “Not to mention flawed in ways the elitists chose to ignore. You see, it has been proven that the purer the blood lines of a husband and wife, the more likely their children will be born with little or no magical ability. Muggle Borns and their near descendants are generally more gifted magically than Purebloods. There are exceptions in every case, but in general it is better to be Muggle Born or have muggle grandparents than it is to be born to a true Pureblood line.”

“Then why don’t people know that?”

“The studies were done in America, for one. They were also done by magical scholars of ‘suspect’ lineage. The Purebloods claim it’s nothing more than lies and propaganda. Truth is, it’s anything but that. But as most key businesses - such as printing - and positions in our magical government are held by either Pureblood elitists or their sympathizers, the truth does not get published to the general population.”

Hermione had tears in her eyes. “Why would I want to be a part of that? Why? It’s terrible!”

“To change it,” Harry said. “You’re a witch, Hermione. It’s what you are. We can avoid what we are - maybe. It is bad. But someone needs to try and change it.”

“How?”

“Donno. Besides, that’s years from now. But we can at least try, can’t we? Somebody has to!”

Hermione nodded. “Long term plan?”

Harry nodded. “Something worth doing.”

“Okay,” she sniffed. “You’ll help?”

“Of course. I am your friend.”



“Thanks, Harry.”

Another change, Sensei mused. In his timeline, years from now it was his Hermione who began to push for change and he had initially been reluctant to sign on. That was mainly because he did not believe it was possible. These two, on the other hand... They might well achieve what he and his Hermione could not.

“Right now,” Sensei said, “while the elitists can be very vocal, they are a minority. They were discredited in the last two wars in our world. They cannot push their agenda through at all. They are, however, unbowed and remain potentially dangerous.

“But, you are right, Hermione. While now is a good time to be a Muggle Born in our world, the conditions that could lead to a reversal still exist. It is this Pureblood nonsense that leads to the future I have come back to try and help you two prevent.”

“Why us?” Harry asked.

“There are reasons, Harry,” Sensei said. “There are some today who believe it is your destiny. I don’t believe in destiny. But I do believe in mathematics.

“About forty years from now, my Hermione develops a very powerful computer program that was designed to simulate history as we knew it and to predict how it could be changed for the better. We and later, after she died, I ran countless simulations over decades. She was far better at that sort of thing than I was, but I understood the math. The results showed conclusively that she and I - and therefore you two - are keystones. The future that I knew can only be changed if she and I do certain things differently than we did before. In this case, the two of you. Every conceivable outcome somehow involves the two of you. For example, if you do nothing, the world ends sooner rather than later, probably within the next fifteen to twenty-five years. I don’t know why, but it is true that you two are the people who, for whatever reason, will be at the right place and at the right time to alter the timeline. That is why I am here and why it’s you and why I am trying



to make sure when the time comes, you will be ready and understand what to do.

"I admit it's a bad deal. No one should have to carry that weight around. If there were any other way, we would have taken it. But, it seems, there isn't."

"Maybe you made a mistake," Hermione suggested.

Sensei shrugged. "I admit neither of us or you is perfect. It is possible. But it would take us thirty years or more just to develop the software to a point where we could check - even then, the hardware necessary won't exist yet. By then it will be too late. Sorry. I really am. But remember, nothing needs to happen for years. You will have time to learn and, unlike last time, you both will be able to have some semblance of a normal childhood - or at least a happier one than before."

Sensei laughed.

"What?" Harry asked.

"There was one flaw in my Hermione's program."

"What?"

"It assumed that you two would meet when we did - September 1st, 1991. It did not take into account the possibility that your lives would be any different than ours were up to that point. I wonder..."

"What?" the two asked.

"I believe you two are still pivotal to a better future," Sensei said, "but I also now believe less will need to be done and fewer may have to suffer to change it for the better of all."

"Now, where was I? Ah yes. Purebloods and history."

"The Pureblood fallacy is not confined to the British Isles, but it has historically been the most prevalent here."



“Why?” Harry asked.

“The belief that Salazar Sytherin deigned that Purebloods should dominate magical society,” Sensei replied, “a belief which has no basis in fact.”

“But why do they despise Muggle Borns and non-magical people?” Hermione asked.

“Muggle Borns are despised because their parents were non-magical. They despise non-magicals because they do not understand them and refuse to understand them. We all tend to fear what we do not understand. If we lack the intellectual curiosity to overcome such fear and look for answers and understanding, fear becomes hate and hate breeds contempt and an unwillingness to learn. The Pureblood elitists are the worst of the lot, but all Purebloods or those who never met a non-magical ancestor of theirs are susceptible.”

“How so?” Hermione asked.

“Those raised entirely within the magical world have no understanding of the non-magical whatsoever,” Sensei replied. “They cannot or will not even try to comprehend. You and Harry, raised in that world are far more capable of understanding magic than any of them are capable of understanding science.”

“Examples?” Harry asked.

Sensei thought for a long time before releasing a sigh. “You must understand this, you two. Most all of the magical people I met and you will meet are good people. They hate the Pureblood elitists even though many were Purebloods themselves. They also mean well. But, that does not mean they understand the larger world or appreciate it.

“There was a man I knew. He was the closest thing I ever had to a father who lived more than a couple of years after meeting me. Never mind that bit for now, please. He was a loving husband and father to his seven children.”



“Seven?” Hermione asked.

“Would have been eight, but they lost their third child - a daughter - to a rare illness when she was a baby. The girl died long before I was born. I knew the family most of my life before the wars claimed them all. I was almost thirty before I learned of her, the pain of her loss was so great on the parents.” Sensei paused with a faraway look clouding his face. He blinked and returned to the present.

“Anyway, this man was a decent sort. He worked for the Ministry of Magic, which is much like a version of the non-magical government; specifically, the Office of the Prime Minister and his Cabinet. More on that later.”

The two children had learned that “Later” meant not today.

“Anyway, he worked in one of several offices that dealt with non-magical people. He claimed to be fascinated by them. When I met him for the first time, he had been working in that office or similar ones for twenty years or so.

“What had he truly learned about the non-magical world in twenty years? Next to nothing. The man had a car, ‘tis true. His wife - another Pureblood - thought he was a bit off. He rarely used it at all, so far as I knew. His hobby was collecting plugs. He’d go to a dump and cut the plugs off of electrical cords. As far as I knew, he had no idea what they were for aside from the fact they had something to do with what he called ‘ekeltricity’. This was an expert in the government on the rest of humanity.

“He could not figure out how to pay for a ticket for the Underground to save his life - not that he died that way, for he did not. He knew nothing of history. Ask him who was the Monarch or Prime Minister and he would not know what they were much less who they were. His one desire in life was to figure out why airplanes fly, a concept you two could figure out from any book store or library in hours or less.

“And he was the expert on Muggles - er - non-magical society! There are dog owners who know more about dogs than he did about the human race! This is the ignorance you two will be faced with.”



“Why should we want to?” Hermione asked.

“To fix it, remember,” Harry said. “Yeah. They’re stupid. But they know no better, right?”

“I suppose, still.”

“Somehow I think their stupidity is the problem. Fix that and Sensei’s mission is fulfilled.”

“Exactly,” Sensei agreed.

“But how?” Hermione asked.

Harry shrugged. He then smiled at her and said: “Donno. But it’s not like we have to have this mess cleaned up by tomorrow.”

“No, I suppose not,” Hermione laughed. “Oh my! Harry! We should be taking notes!”

Sensei laughed again. “Hermione, that won’t be necessary.”

“Why not? I mean this is important isn’t it?”

Sensei nodded. “Indeed it is. But these first lessons if you want to call them that are just the course introduction. We will be exploring all of these topics in much greater detail later. I just want you to take two things away from this now: First, I want you to understand how much you will need to learn and second, I want you to continue doing as you’re doing - ask questions. True, I might not provide an answer right away, but you should always be questioning. Just as the world you know is not always as it seems, so true with the magical world you will come to know.”

“It sounds horrible,” Hermione pouted.

“And your world is not?” Sensei replied. “While things are improving between the Americans and Soviets, they could go pear shaped quite quickly. You know what that means.”



“End of everything,” Harry said. “Is that what happened in your future? The Russians and Americans...”

“No Harry. Even the non-magical future will be very different very soon. I won’t say how, just as I will refrain from telling you what to do. I might give you suggestions, I will tell you what choices I made - assuming you are faced with the same choices which is in no way certain - but you will have to decide for yourself, Harry. You are not my pawn. You must be free to live your own life.

“For a long time, I was a pawn of others. I was because I knew nothing about the magical world and was overwhelmed with wonder, just as my Hermione was. I lacked the critical reasoning skills to question what I saw around me if only in my own mind. I trusted people who were not as trustworthy as I had thought. The result is why you see me today. I want to spare you that. You are a keystone in the timelines. As such, you two must be free to act rather than act as others wish you to act.

“Freedom of action, the ability to defy authority and act because it is the best thing to do, even if those wiser than you fail to see it, that is what the ultimate goal of all the lessons I offer is.

“I know some of this makes no sense. I promise you that it will in time, okay?”

The two nodded.

“I think that will be all for today,” Sensei said. “Time to be children again. Remember your homework and I’ll see you two tomorrow.”



## CHAPTER NINE: WHY HARRY?

SATURDAY, MAY 21, 1988 - ST. BARTHOLOMEW'S CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL, LONDON, U.K.

Harry and Hermione had again spent the rest of that Saturday together. After Hermione left a couple of hours after they had supper together, Harry went back to his school work, determined to finish his year by the time he left the hospital. When the Grangers returned tomorrow, Harry would have three weeks worth of assignments for them to pass on to his teacher. He hoped that he could take the placement exams before he finally could leave the hospital.

When he finished for the day and got ready to go to sleep, he was surprised at how he felt. Even though he saw her everyday, alone like this with nothing to do, he missed his new friend. He was amazed at this. His whole life he had never missed anyone he had known. In most cases, had he never saw them again, it was no loss to him. This girl had then come into his life and just by being his friend showed him there was something - someone - worth living for. He had never thought himself as lonely. Then again, having known nothing but loneliness, he had nothing to compare it against. What Harry did not know was that at that same time, Hermione was having very similar thoughts about the boy she now thought of as her Harry.

---

Hermione's parents were lying in bed reading late that Saturday night. Hermione was asleep and they hoped that Harry was too. It had been an interesting two weeks for the Granger family. It seemed that since Hermione could talk she had asked her parents if she could have a little brother or sister. Her parents had always told her they'd see, but there had been no new little Granger. It's not that the Granger's did not want another child. They did. But there were problems that prevented them from having one.

"Bob?" Rose Granger asked.

"Hmmm?" Robert Granger replied putting his book down.



"You notice anything different about our daughter these last couple of weeks?"

Robert Granger chuckled. "No, not really," he teased. "She's always smiled nonstop and laughed and giggled a lot, hasn't she?"

"You know she hasn't," Rose said.

"I know. I was worried about her, truth be told."

"And now?"

"Still am, but for a different reason."

"What's that?"

"Well, before I was afraid she's never truly be happy. I mean, she's a joy to have around and I do love her so, but she's never really had a friend."

"And now?"

"Now she's happy, I think. I'm worried because maybe it won't last. I'm also worried because maybe it will."

"Why?"

"They barely know each other, Rosie. What if they really can't stand each other?"

"I don't think that's an issue, Bob. I think they adore each other."

"For now. What about later, when he's better?"

"I don't think that's about to change."

"Hence my other worry, Rosie."

"Bob, I think it's adorable."



"Now. She's eight and he's seven. What about when they are older? What about when they are teenagers? That has me worried as well."

"I see. Well, if you want my opinion, first off it'll be years before you have to worry about that. Secondly, I think she could do a lot worse."

Bob nodded. "I guess the good news is we'll be able to keep an eye on them."

"I almost cannot wait until the day when you have to pull Harry aside to give him the 'talk.'"

"So long as you give it to Hermione," Bob groaned.

"You think we should tell her?"

"Now?" Bob asked in shock. "Bit young don't you think?"

"Not that. About who she really is."

"Not yet. Maybe later after school is out. Certainly we want her Aunt here and Harry as well."

"But, do you think she'll be able to handle it?"

"Before Harry, no. It would have destroyed her to know, as we discussed. Now? Now she won't feel so alone."

"I agree. Now, well later this summer, may be the best time."

SUNDAY, MAY 22, 1988 - ST. BARTHOLOMEW'S CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL, LONDON, U.K.

Hermione arrived the next day at around nine in the morning. She was alone, which piqued Harry's curiosity.

"Where are your parents?" He asked after she kissed him on the forehead getting the desired result. Hermione thought he was really cute when he blushed.



“Church,” she said. “We usually go every Sunday, but not the last two because we were concerned about you.”

“So they’re no longer concerned?” Harry sounded disappointed.

“They are, Harry. They probably always will be. It’s just...”

“Just what?”

“Well, now that we’re not afraid you might...”

“What?”

“Er - not get better, they’ve gone to Church to pray for you.”

Harry started to tear up. “No one’s ever done that for me,” he said.

“Not true, Harry. I have every night before bed.”

“Thanks,” he smiled. “So why aren’t you with them?”

“Because I want to be with you and until you’re better and can come with us, I am here. Did you go to church?”

“My Aunt took me every Sunday - unless I was too hurt. My Uncle never went so far as I know.”

“What kind of church?”

Harry began describing the architecture of the building before Hermione cut him off. “No, no. That’s not what I meant, Harry. I mean was it Anglican, Presbyterian?”

“Catholic,” Harry said. “Same as my Mum.”

“Really? That’s excellent!”

“Why?”



“Because we’re Catholic too, Harry! Who would have thought?”

Harry looked at her confused. “My Aunt always said there’s nothing but.”

“Not true, Harry,” Hermione sighed. “There’s loads of different kinds. I’m just glad we go to the same kind.”

“Why?”

“I don’t know,” she said. “I just am.”

“I kind of liked going to church,” Harry said. “It was one of the times the Dursleys would leave me alone. It was also one of the few times when my Cousin would get punished.”

“For what?”

“Acting up. Making a fuss. Trying to hit me. Basically, for being himself. If he acted up, my Aunt would take away his stuff for a few days - or at least until Uncle Vernon got tired of hearing the fat git’s tantrums. I’d hide in my cupboard.”

“Why?”

“Cause I would be laughing so hard.”

“Do you believe in God, Harry?” Hermione asked looking at him intently.

“I didn’t - or maybe I did. I prayed every night that someone would take me away from my Aunt and Uncle. Anyone. I was told to pray for them - never did. Then, as you know, my prayers came true.” He smiled at Hermione and she swore she could feel his joy in her. “I guess that means He must be real. Although, I kind of wish he worked faster.”

Hermione laughed. She then got serious. “I prayed for a friend, now I have one.”



“And you always will, Hermione,” Harry said. She smiled at him and he loved her goofy smile, especially when he made it happen.

---

“Good afternoon, Sensei,” Harry and Hermione said as he appeared about a half an hour after lunch.

“How’s your day been?” Sensei asked.

“Wonderful,” Hermione sighed with a big smile on her face. “Harry and I are...” she blushed.

“We have a lot in common, it seems,” Harry said with a smile.

Sensei smiled. “Indeed you do,” he said. “Maybe even more than my Hermione and I had, due to the change in Harry’s life from my own.”

“Sensei?” Hermione asked. “Did you marry your Hermione?”

“Hermione,” Harry gasped!

“Just asking.”

“Okay.”

“No, Hermione, we did not,” Sensei sighed. “Probably should have, but as I believe I told you, we treasured our friendship, perhaps too much. We loved each other deeply. But neither of us was willing to tell the other how we felt until it was almost too late. We married others. My wife and her husband were brother and sister. I loved my wife, but not like I loved my Hermione. My Hermione liked her husband, but I’m not sure if she ever really loved him. They both died in one of the wars I am trying to help you two prevent. My Hermione’s husband went missing on a mission. Their two children were murdered along with the family they were staying with at the time. My wife was killed in an attack on our home, along with our three children.”



"That's horrible!" Hermione exclaimed.

"Indeed," Sensei said. "Years later, my Hermione told me how she truly felt about me and I finally told her how I truly felt about her. It was a week before she died in the attack on London.

"I don't know if we had married whether things would have turned out any different. I like to think they would have. I do believe we would have been happier regardless. Neither of our marriages were happy. We married into a Pureblood family - Blood Traitors, to be sure - but Purebloods. My Hermione and I wished to live in a more non-magical manner. Our spouses would not hear of it. I think we would have been better off with each other as it should have been than with those two."

"I'm sorry," Hermione said.

"Past life," Sensei replied.

"So Hermione and I are supposed to get married?" Harry asked.

Sensei shrugged. "It's your lives to lead. It is, however, why I told you to be totally honest with each other always. My Hermione and I married the two people almost everyone expected us to marry. We made the mistake of listening to them and not to our hearts. My Hermione's parents expected she would marry me. They were very disappointed when she did not. At the time, we both thought we were doing the right thing. We were both wrong. Maybe you two are supposed to wind up together. That's years in your futures. Follow your hearts and not the expectations of others, wherever it might lead you."

"It's a long time off," Harry said. "But, I do like My Hermione a lot."

"And I like My Harry a lot too," Hermione said with a blush and a smile. Sensei noted that they were now holding hands although he wondered if they knew that they were.

With a chuckle, Sensei continued. "Enough about love lives! As amusing as they may be, that is not today's topic of discussion.



Today we will continue with yesterday's subject on history. Now remind me, what did we learn yesterday?"

"Purebloods suck," Harry said.

"Elitists, Harry," Hermione corrected. "Not all Purebloods are elitists."

"True indeed," Sensei replied. "But enough are, and they are not entirely alone. There are others - including Muggle Borns - who are consumed with hatred such that they go dark."

"What does 'dark' mean?" Harry asked.

"Evil," Hermione said.

"That is a word for it," Sensei agreed. "But what is evil?"

After a long pause, Sensei continued. "There are many definitions of the term. Extreme selfishness is a good one. Hatred for all others is another. In the magical world, dark magic is evil. That kind of magic serves few purposes, none of them beneficial to others. Dark magic includes all magic that is designed to control or harm other humans and serves no other purpose. There are spells that can kill that have other non-lethal uses. Dark magic has no other uses. It also includes branches of magic that, while it does not harm others directly, others must be harmed for the magic to work.

"The lesson today is about Dark Wizards and two in particular. Dark Wizards or witches are those who engage in dark magic. They are criminals in our world. Dark magic is illegal. Every once in a while, however, one becomes very good at it and frighteningly powerful. Power draws the weaker to them. They gain followers and soon they try and impose their views on others not willing to join them. Invariably, this leads to war in our world.

"Throughout history, the leaders of the Dark have come from all backgrounds. Morgana, the sister of King Arthur was Muggle Born. She seduced her own brother with magic to bear his son, Mordred, who was not magical at all. Together, they waged war on Camelot



and lost. But in losing was a victory for Arthur and Camelot were no more either.

“The overwhelming majority of the leaders of the Dark have been Purebloods as have the majority of their followers and supporters. Evil is a human weakness not limited to those of Pureblood. But the Pureblood elitists seem far more susceptible to it than others. Their view is that they should rule all and they willing rally behind a champion of their cause.

“For this lesson, we will discuss two Dark Lords - Dark Wizards who waged wars to gain control over the magical and non-magical worlds. The first was Gellert Grindewald. He was a Pureblood, born into poverty in 1864. He was born in what was then East Prussia and is now a part of the Soviet Union. He attended the magical school Durmstrang, located somewhere in eastern Europe. Unlike many magical schools, Durmstrang does teach the Dark Arts to its students and don't ask me why because I don't know.

“By all accounts, as a student Grindewald was heavily into the Dark Arts. Too much so, if truth be told. Magical school takes seven years to complete. Near the end of his fifth year, Grindewald was expelled. There had been a few suspicious deaths among the students and the staff suspected Grindewald had a hand in the deaths, but could not prove it. Since they lacked evidence to try him for murder, they expelled him. He's said to have wandered about Europe for a couple of years before he came to England to live with a distant relative. Coincidentally or not, he came to live in Godrics Hollow, the village where you were born, Harry.

“There he met a young man about his own age named Albus Dumbledore. Albus had just finished Hogwarts. He had been Head Boy and was at the top of his class at school. He was a gifted student and had already passed for Masters level in two fields of study - similar to a university degree. Everyone believed he was destined to do great things in one field or another. But fate had dealt him a cruel blow.

“Albus had a younger sister, Ariana. She too was magical When she was six, some non-magical boys caught her doing magic and beat



her nearly to death. While she eventually recovered physically, mentally she never recovered from the abuse. Their father had killed the boys for what they had done to his daughter and was sent to prison where he died.”

“That’s horrible,” Hermione said.

Sensei nodded. “Quite tragic. She lived at home with her mother, unable to control her magic. She could be quite dangerous at times. Not long after Albus finished school, there was an accident. Ariana lost control of her magic and her mother was killed. Rather than head off and make his name in the world, Albus stayed to take care of his sister. It was during this time a disappointed Albus met Grindewald.

“Although Albus was unable to pursue his numerous ambitions due to the need to care for his sister, this did not stop his mind from working. He had an idea that one day he hoped would become a reality. Gifted magical people - such as himself - would re-enter the non-magical world as counselors. He wanted to return to the days of Merlin, when the leaders of the world had magical counsel. They would help the non-magicals govern the world and thereby avoid what he saw was a road leading to ruin.

“He confided his ideas in his new friend, Grindewald. While Albus’s intentions may have been altruistic, his new friend’s were not. Grindewald saw Albus’s ‘Greater Good’ as a philosophy that called for wizards to rule the world directly. At the time, most of Europe was still ruled by monarchies. Albus envisioned being the wise counsel behind the throne. Grindewald wanted the throne itself.

“Eventually, there was a violent falling out between the two. The result of that fight was the death of Albus’s sister. He was devastated. Grindewald had fled and Albus was left with having to bury his dead sister. The resulting grief caused him to abandon any of his former ambitions and he retreated into the world of academia. Grindewald, on the other hand, inspired by this notion of a wizard rule, began to advocate for it. He returned to the Continent and became enamored by the works of Karl Marx and the rhetoric of the Bolsheviks for a time, until he realized they hated magic. After the end of the First World War, he found a political movement that embraced both his ideas of



world domination and magic - the German Nazis. He became one of Hitler's trusted advisors in the early 1920's.

"As the Nazi's struggled to gain control in Germany, Grindewald was far more effective within the European magicals. By 1933, when Hitler finally came to power in Germany, Grindewald effectively controlled most of central and eastern Europe and all of Scandinavia. Basically, he ruled the magical world from east of the Rhine river to the then borders of the Soviet Union. France, Holland and Belgium had resisted his efforts, while the Soviet Union stood poised to fall in with him as their magicals were persecuted by the non-magicals.

"In 1935, Grindewald's forces opened warfare into the west, invading France and the low countries. At the same time, his supporters supplied the Russian and Ukrainian magicals as they began fighting back against their non-magical government. By 1940, all of magical Europe except for Britain was under Grindewald's control and there is an argument that the success of the non-magical German Army from 1939 through 1942 was largely due to the fact that the magicals had laid the groundwork.

"The period of the Great European Magical War, as it is known, coincided with a time when the Pureblood elitists held significant influence here in Britain. Because Grindewald did not espouse their agenda, they convinced the magical government that Europe was none of our affair. After all, Grindewald promoted Muggle Borns over Purebloods almost routinely, a practice that incensed the Pureblood elitists.

"That is not to say our government took no action. The then Minister for Magic, Caratacus Prentice, formed a secret organization to aid resistance movements in Europe beginning in 1937. By 1942, this organization had a combat arm of witches and wizards sent to the continent to train resistance operatives and to fight the enemy directly. Its leader was none other than Albus Dumbledore. As he was a professor at Hogwarts, he did not participate directly in combat operations, rather he oversaw the operations. In 1945, he finally left for Europe. Grindewald's forces were all but defeated by then. Dumbledore left to find and destroy Grindewald himself.



“He found the former Grand Warlock outside Dresden not long after the non-magical Nazi’s surrendered to the Allies and defeated his former friend in single combat, thus ending that war. What was not known was that the end of that war inspired another to try and achieve the same or even more than Grindewald had.

“Tom Marvolo Riddle was born in an orphanage in London in 1925. As you may recall, his mother was a Pureblood. His father was a Muggle, tricked into marrying his mother by use of a love potion. The potion wore off when she was pregnant and the father abandoned her. As she was born poor, she was forced to beg and maybe do worse to eat. She died minutes after giving birth some say due to a broken heart.

“Tom grew up hating the world around him. In 1936, he learned he was a wizard and started at Hogwarts. He proved to be a gifted student, but he had side interests as well. He embraced the Pureblood elitist agenda with a zeal and considered Grindewald, who by then was in control of much of the Continent, a hero. Tom committed his first murder in 1941, a fellow student. By the time he had finished school, he had found his father and murdered him and his entire family. Tom also developed the ability to frame others for his crimes. It would be decades before anyone knew of his transgressions.

“After leaving school in 1944, he spent a couple of years working in a magical shop in London. Nobody knew why. He was also circulating in Pureblood society, preaching its praises and quietly recruiting future followers and supporters.

“Following a few more murders, conveniently blamed on someone else, he disappeared for over a decade. No one really knows where he went or what he did during this time. We do know that he came back knowing more Dark Magic than anyone thought possible.

“We don’t know precisely when he returned, only that in the summer of 1960 he applied for a vacant teaching post at Hogwarts. Needless to say, he did not get the posting. We do know he then began rounding up his followers and recruiting more to his cause. The troubles began in 1965. In the beginning, the Death Eaters - as his



followers became known - were few and unknown. Beginning in '65, random act of violence upset the supposed tranquility of our world.

"The Minister for Magic Nobby Leach was certain it was simply an outbreak of criminal activity. Others were not so sure. The victims tended to be law enforcement officers, their families and random Muggle Borns and their families. To some, most notably Dumbledore, it was a disturbing trend. Still, there was little information to draw a clear conclusion that there might be a Dark Lord in the offing.

"In 1968, the Minister for Magic was assassinated. The assassin was caught and the magical world first learned of the existence of one Lord Voldemort and his Death Eaters. Between the death of Leach and the election of our current Minister, Millicent Bagnold in 1980, no less than fifteen Ministers for Magic were elected only to be assassinated by Death Eaters soon thereafter.

"By 1975, terrorism had evolved into open warfare. It was a civil war, which are the worst kinds. Death Eaters were mostly Purebloods, but there were others in the organization who were not. Families lay divided as sons and daughters fought parents and brothers and sisters fought each other - often to the death. People were terrified. Many went into hiding and thousands fled this country. The government was in such a state that it all but ceased to exist.

"Bagnold was elected in 1980, during the darkest days of the war. A highly respected Auror - a Dark Wizard hunter - she was able to avoid no less than three serious assassination attempts. Unfortunately, the government was all but paralyzed. In 1971, Albus Dumbledore formed the Order of the Phoenix made up of people opposed to Voldemort and his ideas and who were willing to fight. For all practical purposes, this was all that stood between Voldemort and the rest of the world. It was not enough. By 1981, the war was all but lost.

"Yet, Voldemort did not win. He made one colossal mistake and it cost him and his side everything."

"What was that?" Hermione asked.



“He tried to kill Harry here. One of Harry’s parents’ best friends had become a Death Eater. He ultimately betrayed Harry’s parents to Voldemort.

“Harry’s parents were not just members of the Order of the Phoenix, they were true warriors. They had dueled Voldemort himself on three occasions and survived. They had ended the career of a score or more of his most faithful followers. That alone was reason for him to kill them, but he went after Harry instead.”

“Why Harry?” Hermione said with fear in her voice.

“Because of a prophecy,” Sensei replied.

“They’re real?” Hermione asked in shock.

“Many believe so,” Sensei replied. “Personally, they are mostly garbage. It is impossible to predict the future, despite what many think. Still, it is because of this prophecy that we are talking today.”

“What was this prophecy.” Harry asked.

Sensei sighed before continuing. “The One with the power to vanquish the Dark Lord approaches...Born to those who have thrice defied him, born as the seventh month dies... And the Dark Lord will mark Him as his equal, but he will have power the Dark Lord knows not... And either must die at the hands of the other for neither can live while the other survives.

“The prophecy was made in the fall of 1979. A spy heard part of it,” Sensei continued. “All the bits up to the seventh month. He did not hear the rest. Voldemort went looking for a baby boy born at the end of July 1980 who fit the description.

“Two boys born at the end of July fit the description. You, Harry, were one. Your parents had fought Voldemort three times and lived before the prophecy was made. You were born at 12:12 on the morning of July 31st, 1980. But you were not alone. Another boy’s parents had also fought Voldemort on three occasions and lived. Their son was born at 11:02 in the evening on July 30th, 1980 - as the seventh



month died. While his parents are not dead, they were attacked some weeks after your parents by Voldemort's followers. They were driven insane and, like you, Neville Longbottom is an orphan for all practical purposes. Unlike you, he still had family and his family does love him."

"So it could have been either of us?" Harry asked.

"Or neither of you," Sensei said. "When the prophecy was made, there was no reason to know for certain. It may have meant another boy born years later. But both sides saw it as meaning you and Neville, Harry. Both of your families were sent into hiding and Voldemort bent over backwards to find both of you. He found you first, to his temporary destruction. I have no doubt, had he found Neville first the result would have been the same, except Neville would be the famous 'Boy-Who-Lived' in our world and not you."

"So it doesn't have to be me then?"

"Not by that prophecy, no Harry. But the mathematics bear out that you are critical to the future, for better or worse. Does that mean you have to kill Voldemort? I don't know, Harry. I did, but it does not mean you must. But he must die, that much is certain. And you will be a key to his undoing, for that much is certain too."

Harry slumped.

"You need not worry yourself now, Harry. These events are years from coming to pass. I was not told any of this until 1996, over eight years from now. I could not prepare and was not prepared. You, Harry - you can and will be, as will Hermione."

"It's so much," Harry almost moaned.

"Indeed. It was a burden for me as well. I see you're reading The Lord of the Rings?"

Harry nodded.

"How far are you?"



“Gandalf just died.”

Sensei nodded. “The ring was a burden for Frodo as well, was it not?”

Harry nodded.

“Yet he bore it anyway?”

Harry nodded again.

“It is better to have history thrust upon you unwillingly than to be one who actively seeks it, Harry. The fact that you do not wish this burden speaks highly of your character. Besides, it’s only a prophecy. Most all are rubbish anyway. Still...”

“Still?”

“In addition to the exercises, between now and Saturday I would like the two of you to think of what that prophecy might mean. It can have many meanings and interpretations, so do not think any one is better than any other. Think of as many possible meanings for each word, phrase and the prophecy as a whole. You may discuss it with each other as well. We will discuss this next Saturday, okay?”

“Yes Sensei,” they both replied.



## CHAPTER TEN: A DISASTER IN THE MAKING

MONDAY, MAY 23, 1988 - ST. BARTHOLOMEW'S CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL, LONDON, U.K.

Harry had begun physical therapy the next day and was now encouraged to get out of his bed as often and for as long as he felt comfortable. His left arm was still in a cast and sling, but he was told that unless something was wrong, the cast would come off later that week. While physical therapy was much harder and far less fun than he had hoped, he was pleased that he was no longer mostly bed ridden.

He was sitting in a chair at a table in his room when Hermione arrived after she finished school. She had started to admonish him for being out of bed, but he told her he had permission and was basically told to spend as much time out of bed as he could stand. She was elated and when he stood, threw herself into his arms. Fortunately, she was very gentle about it. Harry was still a little sore. Still, even if she had hurt him by accident, he would not have minded. It was the first time he remembered ever being hugged by anyone and, to be honest, he liked it.

Harry was surprised when both of the Grangers showed up just as he and Hermione were sitting down to supper in Harry's room on Monday evening. Aside from the day when he first woke up, he had seen one or the other each evening or in the mornings on weekends, but never the two at the same time. Hermione told him that because they were dentists getting that much time off was not easy. Still, Harry had appreciated their visits, even if it was only to stop by briefly for a chat, and to drop off or pick up his school work before taking Hermione home.

"Mr. and Mrs. Granger," he said apprehensively, "what brings you here? I mean you're never here this early and I haven't seen the both of you on week days. Is something wrong?"

"Depends upon who we are talking about, Harry," Mr. Granger laughed. "As far as you are concerned, I guess you could say its wonderful news."



"What is it, Daddy?" Hermione asked as Harry seemed to be at a loss for words.

"We got a call at our office this afternoon from Harry's Social Worker," Mr. Granger explained. "Seems his relations finally returned from their vacation to the Bahamas yesterday. Don't know why they told Harry it was the Caribbean as that's not where the Bahamas are."

"Probably 'cause their ignorant," Mrs. Granger offered.

"Yeah. Most likely," Mr. Granger agreed. "Anyway, due to the warrant, they were detained in customs - well, that is all but that Marge person. There was no warrant for her as there was insufficient evidence to obtain one, but that's neither here nor there.

"Anyway, they stand charged with Child Abuse, Neglect, Endangerment and Abandonment. Serious charges to be sure. Still, as they have no prior criminal record, they were offered a deal to avoid going to jail and having to post bail."

"What kind of deal?" Harry asked.

"They signed papers permanently relinquishing any control over you. They are now no longer your guardians nor custodians. You'll never have to see them again and certainly never have to live there again."

"Brilliant! But I thought I was living with you anyway."

"As a foster child. As a foster child, unless your relatives lost legal control over you permanently or did as they did here, gave it up to someone else, there was a chance you could have been sent back."

Harry was a little surprised to learn this. "And what about me now?"

"You have new, permanent guardians. We actually petitioned for it the same time we volunteered to take you in as foster parents. You're relatives signed away their rights and you're now permanently part of this family. Once you're cleared to leave, you'll be moving in with us.



It might be a pinch as we intend to send you to school with Hermione and it's not cheap, but no worries. It's the least we can do for you."

Harry was clearly tearing up. "Why are you doing this for me?"

"Because you deserve to be treated like a normal little boy," Mrs. Granger said. "Because Hermione really likes you and we do too. Bob and I always wanted another child, but there were reasons why we never had one."

"What reasons, Mummy?" Hermione asked.

"Later, Sweetie. We'll tell you when school's over, okay?"

"I suppose," Hermione pouted.

"You would like to live with Hermione and us Harry?" Mr. Granger asked.

"Yes," he said softly. "I'd like that very much. Is it really that easy?"

"For you it is, yes. We had to do interviews and such, but the government moved far more quickly regarding you than either Rosie or I thought possible. I guess it was because of how bad things were for you before."

Harry nodded. "Thank you," he said. "You have no idea what this means to me."

The Grangers nodded. True, they did not really know, but they could guess.

"Brings up another thing, Harry," Mr. Granger said. "While your Aunt and Uncle are charged, they still have to stand trial. To obtain a conviction, it is likely that you may have to offer evidence in Court. You understand what that means?"

"No sir, not really."



"It means you will have to go to court and answer questions about what happened to you and how you lived when you were with your relatives. It also means their lawyer gets to ask you questions and it's a fair bet he's going to try and make you look bad. I've had to be a witness once and I can tell you it's no fun. But without your testimony, your Aunt and Uncle will not be tried."

"Do I have to?"

"No Harry. We think you should. Your Aunt and Uncle - and especially your uncle - were terrible to you to say the least. The police have told us you were one of the worst cases they have seen where the child did not die at the hands of their relatives. But, as bad as they were, it's up to you."

"If I don't, can they take me back?"

"No Harry. That can never happen. They signed away that right. You're done with them forever."

"Good. I mean that's all I ever really wanted."

"Still, Harry. They deserve to go to jail for what they did to you."

Harry nodded. "Do I have to do it now?"

"No Harry. There's plenty of time. Think about it, okay?"

"I will," Harry said. He wasn't sure he wanted to go to Court about this. After all, he got what he wanted. So what if they never got what they deserved. Still, he would think about it.

WEDNESDAY, MAY 25, 1988 - HOGWARTS SCHOOL OF WITCHRAFT AND WIZARDRY, SCOTLAND, U.K.

Albus Dumbledore, Headmaster of Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry had only just arrived back at his school after several weeks absence. He had other duties as well and they took up a fair amount of his time. His frequent absences from the school were known to all and seldom commented upon. Still, as always, upon his



return he almost always found a mountain of work waiting for him. He had been sifting through the paperwork on his desk for the last several hours.

The most disturbing paper was a letter from Professor Caspian. She taught a course called "Defense Against the Dark Arts." She had only been on the job for this past academic year and was well regarded in her short tenure by students and staff alike. Yet, here in black and white was her resignation. She was getting married - which surprised the Headmaster as he was unaware that she had any romantic life. Still, she was young so he guessed this was to be expected. Her position had been a source of constant frustration to him for almost thirty years. No professor had held the post for more than a year and a half. Well, he thought, at least she's going to finish out this term. He had had more than enough mid-year resignations from that position.

Tired from his journey he now focused on catching up on the school's business as soon as possible, not to mention answering goodness knows how many letters, Albus did not notice the strange instruments aligned on a shelf on the far side of his office. The truth was, as important as they were, he almost never noticed them. For years they had continued their various movements and displays without any noticeable change or interruption. So much so that he barely even recalled they were there. There had been no need to check on them. Had he bothered to look, he would have seen that all of the instruments had ceased to function.

A knock at his office door caused him to look up from his work. Only one person could access his office without his prior invitation: the school's Deputy Headmistress, Minerva McGonagall. He sighed. She was judicious in her use of that privilege and only knocked when there was something that truly demanded his attention. Still, he had hoped to get through the piles of papers before a new crisis rose its head.

"Come in," he said loud enough.

A tall and severe looking woman entered the room. Dressed in flowing, emerald colored robes with a short yet pointed hat and wearing square shaped, wire rimmed glasses, she looked to be in her



mid to late fifties, but Albus knew she was much older. She was thirty-eight when she started as an instructor, and that was over thirty years ago.

“Ah, Minerva,” he said cheerily, “and what, pray tell, can you do to take me away from this monotony of papers? You are aware that once again I shall be short an instructor? Sharon has submitted her resignation.”

“Indeed I am,” she replied. “But I regret that’s not why I am here, Albus. Auror Shacklebolt wishes to speak with you. He says it’s urgent.”

“Very well,” Dumbledore sighed. A tall man with dark skin entered. In his attire he could easily be confused with a banker, but he was anything but a banker. He was a wizard, one of few who could truly pass unnoticed in the non-magical world. Despite being a Pureblood, he knew the non-magical world as if he had grown up in it, which in fact he had. He was raised in Jamaica where the lines between magic and non-magic were blurred most effectively. This made him an exceptional Auror, as he could interact with non-magical law enforcement with some ease that no other Auror seemed to possess or comprehend.

Kingsley Shacklebolt had also been a member of the Order of the Phoenix, dedicated to the defeat of Voldemort and his Death Eaters. He had joined the Order just after graduating at the top of his Auror class at the Academy and, maybe not coincidentally, just after the Longbottoms and Potters had been sent into hiding. A protégé of the famous Auror Alastor “Mad-eye” Moody, he feared few and was far more a warrior than his government would like to admit. In combat he could be quite terrifying. But this was not combat.

“Professor,” he said formally.

“Kingsley,” Albus replied. “The remaining Death Eaters up to something, I take it?”

“No Sir. No evidence of Dark Magic or Unforgivables to speak of. This is more of a personal matter, to you that is. You asked for certain



reports from a Squib Ms. Arabella Figg? Should you be away, she was to forward any such reports to me, yes?"

"And how is the indomitable Ms. Figg?" Albus asked.

"Late last night she contacted me in a panic. She said the target was ablaze and burning to the ground despite the best efforts of the local Fire Brigade. Later she reported bodies being removed in bags. I would have reported sooner, but as this is not official business..."

"Where?" Albus asked in a panic. "Did she tell you an address?"

"Number 4 on her street," Kingsley said.

"How many bodies?" Albus asked even more in a panic.

"At least three, she said. Maybe more."

"And no sign of Death Eater activity?"

"It's a Muggle household. No spells were detected so naturally, it's none of our business."

Albus's mouth almost dropped open, but Minerva did notice his face pale unnaturally. He looked over at the instruments he had long ignored. They had once danced merrily, as he liked to think of it. Now they all seemed dead to him. "Merlin's Beard," he exclaimed as quietly as he could.

"Albus?" Minerva asked with concern losing her usually formal voice.

"This is critical," Albus said to the Auror ignoring his Deputy for the time being. "You must find out what happened there! You must find out the fate of all the occupants of that house! All of them for there were four who lived there. This is more important than anything! Understand?"

"No sir," Kingsley said honestly, "I do not. It was a Muggle home. There's no evidence of a Death Eater attack. But you ask, so I shall find the answers!"



"Thank you! Now! Sooner rather than later!"

"How important is this, Sir?"

"Life and death, my friend. Life and death for us all in the end."

"Yes Sir." Kingsley immediately hurried from the office.

"Albus?" Minerva asked.

"Were I what the Muggles call a God fearing man," Albus replied, "I would be terrified beyond anything, Minerva. I am not. Still I am seriously concerned about our future."

"What do you mean?"

"Unless I am mistaken, something terrible has happened. It may have just been a freak occurrence. It may also have been the result of a deliberate act. How matters not. If it has happened, all will be lost."

"What Albus? What has happened?"

"I pray that for once I am so wrong Minerva."

"What?"

"But if my instruments are right," Albus was soon lost in thought.

"What?"

"Harry Potter is dead."

"WHAT?"

WEDNESDAY, MAY 25, 1988 - NUMBER 4 PRIVET DRIVE, LITTLE WHINGING, SURREY, U.K.

Investigator Smith of the Surrey Police had been pacing just outside the police line for several hours as the Fire Brigade finished with the



site and the Chief Fire Investigator and his team combed through the rubble of what had once been a family and their home. He was worried as the man of the house had recently been subject to arrest for child abuse and such. This could be a suicide / murder deal or just plain murder. The preliminary investigation of the mutt suggested he had some less than savory business relations so this could be a hit or just plain arson. His job was usually so quiet. Much as he knew his men would love the overtime pay, they also liked their almost normal hours. Worst case, this was an all hands on deck case. So much for the summer holidays with the kids, he thought.

"Ah, Captain Anson," he said as the man with the yellow jacket walked towards him. Anson was the chief fire investigator for the area. "This a crime scene?"

"Pity for you and your blokes," Anson said, "'fraid not. Just a bloody disaster."

"What do you mean?"

"No sign of accelerants or other unnatural sources of ignition," Anson replied. "Not a bloody electrical fire either. Here!" He handed Smith what looked like a copper pipe. "Gas line. They're all not much better," he said.

"Looks fine to me," Smith said.

"Squeeze it," Anson suggested. Smith did and it all but dissolved between his fingers.

"Bloody hell!"

"Gas supply is contaminated with something," Smith continued. "Some kind of oxidizing agent's been eating at the copper from the inside of the pipes, probably for years. Best guess is the entire supply is compromised. It's a wonder the whole neighborhood didn't go up. Too early to tell. Could be water. Then again, upstream the supply to this house passes through a chlorine plant. If there's contamination - bugger us all! The whole bloody town could go up!"



"So this house is just the first?"

"I'd say so. Need to shut off the gas and check everything in the system."

"Gonna cost someone a bloody fortune!"

"Better them than us, eh?"

"Thank God it's summer almost!"

"Yeah. We've already contacted the gas company. They're pissed as hell, of course. But they've shut off the supply to this part of Surrey. Chlorine company and everyone downstream are shut off for now."

"So this is just an unfortunate accident?"

"Seems that way, Inspector. Investigation is still ongoing, of course."

"Of course," Investigator Smith nodded. Deep down he was relieved. He hated murder investigations. They were all so depressing.

WEDNESDAY, MAY 25, 1988 - HOGWARTS SCHOOL OF WITCHCRAFT AND WIZARDRY, SCOTLAND, U.K.

"What do you mean Harry Potter is dead?" McGonagall asked incredulously!

"I mean it's the most likely scenario," Dumbledore replied. He was clearly depressed about the possibility. "These devices," he said to Minerva pointing to the now motionless objects on a long ignored bookcase, "two of them monitor the wards on Privet Drive. The other four monitor Harry. They were all quite animated as always when last I looked, which was a few weeks ago. Now they are silent and motionless."

"The wards have clearly fallen. Only two things could do that. The less likely is Harry found a new home and new family. Bloody doubtful as the Dursleys would never allow that. They've been making too much money off of the boy. The more likely are the Death



Eaters found him or he died. His monitors are all silent as well, supporting the conclusion that he's gone. True, they are tied into the Wards on his Aunt's house, still. Best case, he is lost to us. Worst case, he's dead. Either way, in the long term we are ruined!"

"I told you not to leave them with that family, Albus!"

"You don't understand, Minerva. It was the only place that could be safe for him! His mother's sacrifice! The Wards I could create from that! Nothing evil should have befallen him!"

"Except his relations," Minerva said. "Worst sort of people they are! I told you!"

"His Aunt was his mother's sister! Blood is thicker than water!"

"You really do not understand human relations, do you Albus! Sometimes, being related is worse than being enemies! His Aunt and her husband would have treated him worse than a House Elf in the most brutal of Houses!"

"That was not unanticipated, Minerva," Albus said getting defensive. "His humility was important to develop!"

"AND NOW HE'S LOST OR DEAD! WAS THAT FOR YOUR GREATER GOOD, OR JUST YOUR HUBRIS RUN AMOK?"

"You're forgetting yourself, Minerva."

"Am I? Am I really, Albus? You lost a sister once. I lost my siblings, my husband, my children and grandchildren! You may see lives as a statistic on a ledger, Albus. I see them as people who deserved better. Was Harry nothing more than yet another pawn in your schemes? Did that boy not deserve a chance at a happy life? Who are you to play God, Albus?"

"Minerva..."

"I told you the day you dropped him off at that place you were making a terrible mistake. I hoped I was just being foolish and hoped



time would prove me wrong. I now regret I did not do more for the boy!”

“Such as?”

“Such as take him from that place and leave him with a family that would care for him and protect him...”

“The Wards!”

“You place too much faith in magic and ignore humanity and it’s obvious imperfections! You handed him over to a pair of Muggles that would have cast him into a fire if they thought they could get away with it! You forget, do you not? That man binned him! He was only a baby and the man put him out for the Dustman to pick up! Had his wife not been afraid of the possible legal retribution...

“Magic might protect him from Death Eaters - but doesn’t that assume they knew where to look? You had to hand him over to a blood relative? You think if he went up for Muggle adoption those Pureblood bastards would have any clue where he was? He could have hidden in plain sight and they’d never find him. No! You placed your faith in magic and trusted blood would protect him. YOU WERE WRONG!

“Minerva,” Albus pleaded with his old friend.

“NO! You made your bed, now lie in it!” She turned on her heel and stormed out of his office.

---

It was almost midnight before Kingsley Shacklebolt returned.

“I pray you have good news?” Dumbledore asked.

“Depends on what you consider good. It was not a Death Eater attack. Muggles confirmed it was something no magic could have done.”

“What?”



"You expect me to understand their science? Pipes eaten away from inside. Everywhere, not just at that house. It was merely the first to go up in a gas fire. Any house in that town might have, Sir."

"And the occupants?"

"Three corpses were removed, all burnt beyond any recognition. Two adults and a child of unknown gender. Height places the child between age six and nine. Will be weeks before they have a positive identification. Kid has no fillings and thus no decent dental records to verify his or her identity."

"There were four living there."

"Really? Okay, Ms. Figg said so, but the muggles say otherwise."

"And what has Ms. Figg to say?"

"Hasn't seen any of them in weeks, Sir. Not a one!"

"Thank you," Dumbledore said dismissing the Auror. He was now certain the one person who could save the world from Voldemort was lost. How could this have happened? It seemed so - so avoidable! Maybe Minerva was right. Maybe he should have placed the boy somewhere else. Maybe...

THURSDAY, MAY 26, 1988 - MINISTRY OF MAGIC, LONDON, U.K.

Millicent Bagnold, the Minister for Magic, Chief Executive of Magical Britain and thereby the head of that government was furious. Before her was the most respected wizard alive and he was here to tell her he had failed so miserably she would be lucky to survive six more days in office? She had survived more assassination attempts than any Minister in history, yet should word of this colossal tragedy get out, she was gone - unless she could skillfully deflect the blame.

Millie was a skilled politician. She knew the game better than most and, more importantly, she was not beholding to anyone. Bribes had been part and parcel with her office for who knows how long before



she assumed it. The fools knew she could not be bribed and was so clean she could not be blackmailed. She had no family so extortion was out of the question as well. But this? This could be her undoing - and it wasn't even her fault!

"So you're telling me, Albus," she growled, "that you've lost him? Worse still, he may be dead?"

"That would seem to be the situation," Albus Dumbledore replied.

"You have any idea what will happen if the word gets out?"

"I can imagine."

"Can you? Can you really? Everything I have worked for down the drain and all because YOU decided it what was best to do with that boy? And now you've lost him?"

"As I said, I am not unaware of the political ramifications, but there are larger issues at stake such that..."

"LARGER ISSUES? Look! I am no idiot! It may well be there are larger issues. But let's face the IMMEDIATE issue! You were entrusted by this government with the protection and well being of The Boy Who Lived. That's like the entrustment of the Mona Lisa with the Louvre! AND YOU'VE LOST HIM?"

"Minister, I..."

"I know your reputation, Sir! Chief Warlock of the Wizengamot! Supreme Mugwump of the International Confederation of Wizards and you have more academic credentials than anyone - BUT YOU BLOODY WELL BUGGERED IT ON THIS ONE!"

Albus hated seeing her this way. She could cuss up a storm better than a sailor, had he known what that was. The problem was, she was right.

"Hate to say this, Dumbledore, but it's got to go public."



“What?” Dumbledore asked.

“If I try to cover this error in judgment up, they’ll hang me first in the press and then in the legislature. I’ll be out of office so fast and that arse licking bastard Fudge will be in replacing the Pureblood Conservative bog rolls with his tongue to get this office!”

Albus Dumbledore really hated when anyone got crude, but knew when Millicent did, she might have a real point.

“I’m sure we can...” Albus started.

“Ever hear the muggle American expression ‘Who’s we, Kemosabe?’ Forget we. You lost him. Our world entrusted him to your protection and YOU LOST HIM! This falls on your head! I sincerely doubt your positions are at risk if that comes out. The ICW could care less about our domestic troubles. Most of the Wizengamot either kisses your boney arse or is too scared to do anything. No one questions your ability as Headmaster of our best school. You can take the hit - AND YOU WILL!

“I’m sure I was not the only one to tell you that his welfare was not just your concern or to tell you I thought you had your head crammed so far up your bum you had to fart to breath on this one, Dumbledore. I’m sure I was not alone in that! The kid may have no memory as to what had happened and I admired your attempt to shield him from his celebrity for as long as possible - BUT TO LOSE HIM ALTOGETHER?”

“That was not my intent,” Albus began.

“BUT IT IS NOW MY PROBLEM! You promised me he would be safe and would enter your school as planned in 1991. Seems you blew that one! I should not have trusted you with that child’s welfare!”

“But he was important,” he protested, “more important than you can imagine!”

“Yet you lost this treasure, didn’t you? Let’s ignore the scores of authors who have used him as inspiration for profitable books. Our



world sees him like our non-magicals see the Princess of Wales and her two boys. You think our world is going to ignore this? You think we can hide it? Bloody hell! I cannot hide anything! There are leaks to the press throughout the Ministry!"

Albus nodded. There was nothing left to do really, for the damage had already been done. "I'll take the blame, Minister," he said. "I'll make the necessary statement to the press. The only thing they might fault you for is trusting me."

She nodded for that was the one concession she had wanted. It had been easier than she had expected. Dumbledore clearly was upset about the whole situation and obviously upset with himself. "And what do you intend to tell them - the press that is?"

"As I do not know for certain the boy's fate, I will tell them he died in that fire."

"Why?"

"If he is in the magical world, whether under safe keeping with some other family or as hostage to a former Death Eater, I'm sure we'll find out real soon."

"And if he's in the non-magical world?"

"For the next few years, no one will be looking for him."

The Minister nodded. "It might work. And I might be able to take advantage of the field day your going to enjoy in the press."

"How so?"

"While everyone is distracted by your scandalous loss, I might be able to finally have that case properly investigated."

"Small compensation," Albus sighed.



“Long overdue. Who knows, I might get doubly lucky and be able to rid myself of some of the less trust worthy types in the Ministry. This might actually turn out to be slightly beneficial.”

Albus frowned but understood. Millicent Bagnold did not get to where she was without knowing how to be a cut throat politician and she would not lose sleep over a few ruined careers.

A/N: I don't see Dumbles as evil in this. Manipulative? You bet. Misguided? For certain. And most definitely insular and set in his ways, but not evil.



## CHAPTER ELEVEN: MEET THE PARENTS

SATURDAY, MAY 28, 1988 - ST. BARTHOLOMEW'S CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL, LONDON, U.K.

Harry was sitting in bed the following Saturday morning reading a book - The Two Towers - when the Grangers arrived. They usually arrived as a family on Saturday mornings, actually they always had these past few weeks. But they usually were all smiles. Not today and that had Harry worried.

His whole life had been nothing but disappointment and heartbreak. His relatives hated him. Anytime something came up that seemed like it would make his life even a little better, they found a way to take it from him. He knew the Grangers liked him. Hermione was his first friend ever and now, somehow, they were upset. That could only mean...

"I'm not coming home with you, am I?" Harry asked in a panic. "My Aunt and Uncle won't let me, will they?"

"No Harry," Mr. Granger said, "that's not it. You're still coming home with us when they release you."

Harry seemed to relax. "But then why do you all look upset? Did I do something wrong?"

Hermione started to cry silently, Harry noticed. "Hermione?"

All she could do was sniff.

"What is it?" Harry all but demanded.

"It is about your relatives, Harry," Mr. Granger replied. "Something happened to them."

"What? Are they okay?"

"No Harry, they're not. There was a fire at their house a few nights ago. Gas leak started it. They're all gone."



“Dead?”

Mr. Granger nodded.

Harry did not like his relatives. He all but hated his Uncle who had beaten him more times than he cared to remember. Still, all he wanted was to leave and live somewhere else. Deep down, he did not really want them to die. “Dead?” he asked again as the tears began leaking.

“Yes Harry,” Mr. Granger said softly.

“Can - can I see them?”

Mr. Granger shook his head. “They died in their sleep, Harry. The fire investigator thinks either from the gas or the smoke from the fire. But the fire quickly got out of control. Their bodies were horribly burned, we’ve been told.”

Harry could not stop himself as he began to cry.

“I didn’t want them to die! I just wanted to be away from them! It’s my fault!”

Hermione was at his side quickly. She crawled into his bed and pulled him into a hug - as her mother had done for her at times. She held him tightly as he cried. “It’s not your fault Harry,” she said as soothingly as she could manage. “You weren’t there.”

“I should have been,” Harry said. “I should have been there! I could have saved them!”

“How?”

“D-donno.”

“I do,” a deep voice called.



“Sensei?” Hermione asked first.

The older Grangers looked at the old man dumbstruck for the moment.

“What d-do y-you mean?” Harry asked.

“Remember, Harry, our lives are now much different. A few days after my relatives came back from their trip, I could not sleep. I was still in a lot of pain from the beatings. I was dozing in my cupboard when I smelled gas. I got out and tried to find the source, afraid that maybe I left on one of the gas burners on the stove. I could hear the hissing and knew it was coming from behind the stove. I woke up my relatives. They were none too happy about it - until they smelled the gas. They got out of the house and called the fire brigade. The leak was stopped before there was a fire.”

“And you got treated better after?” Harry asked.

“They never beat me as severely. But no, Harry. I was still dirt in their eyes. And I had to live with them for another ten years.”

“You saved their lives and they still...” Hermione began.

“My Uncle was an evil man, Hermione. My Aunt was scared of him, maybe even terrified. She could not stop it on her own and was afraid to ask for help. She married him for all the wrong reasons. He was a bully in his youth and was not much better as an adult. My poor Aunt Petunia was a weak person. She had so much potential as she was at least as smart as my Mum, but she had no ambition whatsoever. She scored top marks on her A levels and could have had her pick for universities, but could not do it. She was working as a waitress when my Uncle Vernon came in for lunch. She was so lonely by then and so heartbroken about alienating herself from the only person who had encouraged her - my Mum - that, well. She married my Uncle when she refused to get rid of her unborn child. I don't think he ever forgave her for that. When I came along, my Uncle had another target for his abuse. Besides, I really did not expect anything to change.”



Harry thought about what Sensei said for a while, they both did. Harry knew Petunia was not the real problem, it was Vernon. She had tried to take care of him when they were alone together. She insisted on sending him off to Mrs. Figg's to keep him away from the others. She would even lock him in his cupboard when she could if she thought Vernon might go off on him. She didn't deserve to die. Harry wondered, what if Vernon was not around? Would it have been different for him?

"Then why'd you save them?" Hermione asked finally.

"My Hermione said I always had a 'Saving People Thing.' I just could not help myself. Got me in loads of trouble," Sensei replied.

"And me?" Harry asked.

"The fact that you're so upset tells me you have it too, Harry. I was always upset when I couldn't save someone - even if I didn't like them at all."

"Who are you?" Mrs. Granger finally asked. "How do you know Harry and my daughter?"

"And where the bloody hell did you come from?" Mr. Granger added.

"You can see me?" Sensei asked.

"Of course we can! We're not blind!"

"Interesting! Interesting indeed. And yet you missed the other three questions," Sensei laughed. "Those being what am I, how am I and when am I. It's good to see you two again, Bob and Rosie. It's been a long, long time."

"You know us?" Rose Granger asked.

"I have, I do, I will," Sensei replied.

"Is he daft," Robert Granger asked turning to the children. They shrugged.



"Are you asking if am I a nutter?" Sensei asked in reply.

"That sums it up nicely," Robert shot back.

"Ah, but you know that the really wealthy cannot be nutters," Sensei replied, "only eccentric."

"I'm going to be rich?" Harry asked.

"Going to be?" Sensei laughed. "Harry, you are quite the wealthy young man!"

"How do you know this?" Robert asked.

"He's me," Harry said. "Well, sort of. I sent him back from the future, it seems. Well, a version of me did anyway."

"WHAT?"

"Perhaps I should explain?" Sensei suggested. The Grangers nodded after noting the big smiles on the children's faces. At Sensei's suggestion, they took a seat as Hermione stayed somewhat snuggled with Harry while Sensei explained who and what he was.

"So you're from the future?" Robert asked in almost disbelief.

"A possible future," Sensei agreed. "Just a possible one."

"Still, you know if you change the timeline, change your history..."

"My timeline will cease to exist, yes. As I told you, in the future I come from, the human race is wiped out. That's a fate worth destroying."

"But, I thought..."

"That if I changed the past that way all time eventualities would cease to exist?"

Robert Granger nodded.



“Ah, the time paradox, yes?”

Another nod.

“It presumes time is linear. Only the past is - rather only the unaltered past is. The future is limitless and can proceed in any direction. Eliminate one direction and the remaining possibilities are still infinite. I am here to ensure that the past that cannot be changed does not lead to the future I know. Any future is better, but a better future than any envisioned would be the ideal.”

“And Harry’s a key in all this?”

“Unfortunately,” Sensei agreed.

“What?” Harry asked.

“The past has placed you in a position where you are key to the future, Harry. It sucks. It sucked when I went through it and it will suck for you, too. No one should have that thrust upon them. But the spells my Creator used could not allow me to interact with anyone but you and those you trust. In a perfect world, my Creator and his Hermione would have seen to it that Tom Riddle died at birth along with his mother. But that option was not possible when I was sent back. I could only come back during your lifetime and could only do my task when you are old enough to learn.”

“And you are to teach him magic, I suppose?” Rose asked. It was the first time either of Hermione’s parents mentioned magic. Sensei was almost dumbfounded.

“You know about magic?” he asked.

“We’ve known for some time - er - what should we call you?”

“Sensei is fine.”



"We've known," Robert continued. "We knew our daughter's 'special gift' was magic - that she's a witch. Obviously, Harry is a wizard as well."

"You've known," Hermione all but shrieked! "You've known all this time?"

"That you were a witch? Yes Tinkerbelle - or perhaps you missed the hidden meaning behind my secret name for you?"

"Tinkerbelle?" Harry asked Hermione quietly.

"Watch it, buster," Hermione growled at him.

"Sorry, it's just..."

"Only Daddy can call me that!"

"Okay," Harry seemed to sulk.

"For now," Hermione added when she saw he was hurt.

"For now," Harry nodded. "Can I come up with my own name for you?"

"M-maybe," Hermione said. She wasn't sure if she wanted one. Most kids her age had called her names that were not nice.

"Hmmm," Harry chuckled to himself as Hermione kissed his forehead.

"So you've known I was a witch," Hermione said returning to her now dumbfounded parents. "You never told me!"

"Erm," Rose began.

"WHY NOT?"

"Sweetie, how did you come to learn this?" Rose asked sternly.



“Sensei told Harry and me as well,” Hermione replied meekly. “He had to tell Harry and since I could see him...”

Rose nodded. “We were going to tell you, Sweetie, eventually. It was - ah - inevitable. Did Sensei tell you about the Magical Secrecy Laws?”

Hermione nodded.

“We could not tell you until we had to, Hermione,” her father continued. “It’s not as if we wanted to keep this from you, but the secrecy laws had to be upheld. Telling you risked you telling others. They would have taken you away from us. We could have lost you had that happened.”

“We cannot lose you,” Rose Granger added.

“But you knew?” Hermione asked.

“We knew about magic since well before you were born, Hermione. My younger brother was magical as was your Dad’s younger sister. We knew. Your Aunt Minnie is too and she told us that you were as well.”

“And you never thought she was a freak?” Harry said in shock.

“No Harry, we never did. Nor do we think you are. You are gifted from God, not freaks or accidents. We don’t fully understand your talents. We accept them, however. Hermione is our child and now so are you. We accept you for who you are, not what. We really don’t understand your talents near as much as we’d like. Aunt Minnie helps but...”

“Aunt Minnie?” Harry asked.

“She’s a witch. Wanted to be here on the day we told Hermione, but...”

“Sensei beat her to it?”



Rose Granger nodded. "Still, there's more to tell our daughter. Robert?"

"Aunt Minnie is coming by today," Robert Granger replied. "Maybe?"

Rose nodded.

"Maybe what?" Hermione asked.

"Later, Dear," Rose Granger said. "When Grand Aunt Minnie is here."

"Okay," Hermione pouted. She did not like waiting to learn. "What happened to my Aunt and Uncle? I never knew I had any."

"They were killed by evil wizards during the last wizard's war, Hermione. They died before you were even a year old."

"Oh." Sensei had told them about that war. It sounded awful then. But to know it had touched her own family? That was not right!

"So, Sensei," Robert Granger began, "what are your plans for our children."

Harry looked up at this. He could not believe what he had just heard. He never had been anyone's child, at least not since his real parents died, and he did not remember them at all. Now he was part of a family. It scared him a bit, but thrilled him even more.

"Well, my original plans are useless now," Sensei said.

"Why?"

"I was originally intended to arrive at Harry's Aunt and Uncle's place on July 1st, 1995. It was just after the end of Harry's Fourth Year at Hogwarts. Voldemort had returned to a physical form. I had witnessed the event itself. A friend of mine was killed in cold blood right before my eyes and I had been made an unwilling participant in Voldemort's return. The coming year would be the worst year of my life up to that point and that was saying something.



“Harry would be in desperate need of information, friendship and training that summer and he would be denied it by his magical guardian for ‘The Greater Good.’ This Guardian believed Harry had a destiny. That destiny would culminate in Harry’s death as a Martyr.”

“What!” the four exclaimed.

“Obviously, that did not happen, else I would not be here aged 168 years. Still, the Guardian’s plan blinded me for years. I trusted him and believed what he was doing was for the best. I also believed he was infallible and could not make a big mistake. He did. I would not learn of it for over twenty years and when I did, the next war was upon us and it led to the final two wars that wiped out mankind.

“My tasking is and was simple. Harry will not walk down that path. He will walk a path of mostly his own choosing and he shall learn that his destiny is his to control and no one else has the right to control it for him. As I have over shot my target time by over seven years, I now see a golden opportunity, at least as far as Harry - and Hermione - are concerned. My plan is very different now.

“First goal, getting Harry better. Although I have begun their training, the real fun cannot begin until Harry is healthy again. Second goal is also a request. Harry and Hermione are going to start an intensive course of magical and physical training. Once that starts, they will need food.

“The training will burn prodigious amounts of energy and on top of that they are still growing children, which also requires energy. They will need at least 4,000 calories a day of healthy eating. I don’t mean healthy for you, though. In their case, fatty foods are not bad. Those 4,000 calories should be full of proteins, vitamins and carbohydrates and a fair bit of fats: bacon, sausages and at least two eggs at breakfast along with toast and other foods. Whole milk is key. Plenty of fruits and veggies. They should also be allowed at least another 1,000 calories of pure energy foods - you call them junk food: candy, potato chips, sodas, stuff like that.”

“And they won’t get fat?” Rose asked.



“No. They won’t. You will have to monitor them carefully. 5,000 calories a day might not be enough to keep them healthy with their training requirements, at least during the summer months. During their school year, we may be able to cut back a bit because their school work comes first.

“I’ve been working with them on mind skills. They are learning the disciplines that will make them far more able to learn magic. They are also learning a type of magic call occlumency.”

“What’s that?” Harry asked.

“Your safe place in your head, Harry. That safe place we shall build into a veritable fortress that only those you want can ever enter. There is another kind of mind magic out there and they will be used on you and Hermione which is why you need your fortresses. It is known as Legilimancy. In its benign form, this magic can allow a person to read another person’s memories and emotions with ease. While one cannot read thoughts, still it is useful. In its malevolent form, it allows one to attack another’s mind and can force them to do things or drive them insane. Not pleasant at all. Voldemort was a master at this magic, but he was not alone. Occlumency blocks this kind of intrusion into your mind and, when mastered, can allow you to trap your attacker. Harry and Hermione need to learn how to protect themselves and their secrets.

“I will also train them in magic as well as physical combat techniques. When the time comes and if they choose to engage, they will be ready. My Hermione and I, while quite gifted, were not. They will be and it can make all the difference in a war.”

“War?” Robert Granger asked.

“Yes, Mr. Granger, a war. You were S.A.S. in your youth, so you know war. Most witches and wizards do not, which was why we lost in my timeline. Well, we won, but at a terrible cost because we refused to kill the enemy.”

“That’s madness,” Robert Granger said. “If they are out to kill you...”



"I agree," Sensei said. "I hope this timeline has changed such that Harry and Hermione might not be thrust into battle at the tender ages of eleven and twelve respectively. I hope Harry here won't have to kill a man at age eleven as I did. But I cannot promise that will not be so. Hence, they train."

"Non-magical combat?" Robert asked.

"With your permission, of course. I can teach them the martial arts. But there is one who is much better. Sensei Teneru Watanabe. He runs a school in Kyoto Japan. They teach eastern martial arts, eastern and western magic as well as non-magical subjects. They run a summer camp of sorts. Three or four weeks, it is. I can assure you, as four summers separate them from when they have to enter the wizarding world, Harry and Hermione will be ready for whatever awaits them once they enter the wizarding world in a few years."

"What sort of non-magical subjects?" Rose Granger asked.

"All sorts," Sensei replied. "Math, sciences, art, literature, history, languages. They also teach music so Harry can continue with the piano if he wishes."

"I do," Harry said.

"And cooking," Sensei added.

"Really?" Harry asked.

"Really."

"Hermione's taking the violin," Rose added.

"And she could continue."

"In three or four weeks?" Robert asked, "that's impossible!"

"To you, they will be away for about a month. To them, more like four or five years. With no outside distractions, they should effectively finish primary school by the end of summer."



"Hold on," Rose said, "my baby will be five years older?"

"No. The magic they use to - er - slow real time does not allow them to age more than a couple of months. Their physical, mental and magical skills will be that of two people who had trained for four or five years. They, however, will not have aged at all."

"And how much will this cost?"

"Money will not be an issue," Sensei said. "One of the first things you should do with Harry, aside from buy him some decent clothes, is to take him to the Bank of London. He can access his accounts from there. As this is an education related expense, his trust fund can pay for it."

"And its just this once?"

"No. I was thinking each summer starting this summer and ending no sooner than the summer before they start Hogwarts."

"But where will they be by then - education wise?"

"If they apply themselves, they may be near master levels in several of the eastern martial arts including karate, taekwondo, aikido, jujitsu, and the Japanese sword disciplines. With wands, they could well be beyond what it taught at Hogwarts by the time they are invited to attend. Their wandless skills may be beyond almost anyone in Europe. Academically, they may well enter Hogwarts with their college degrees completed."

"Then why send them to Hogwarts at all?" Robert Granger asked.

"Because that's were it all happens. It will be the focal point of the coming war which cannot be stopped and must be won."

"We'll think about it."

"Please Daddy?" Hermione all but begged. "It sounds wonderful."



"I said we'll think about it."

Sensei laughed watching Hermione pout. His Hermione never did that. "That's all I can ask for now. If you decide not to, there are other things I can do."

"But they must do this?"

Sensei shook his head. "They should do this. It will make their lives better than it would otherwise be. It only becomes necessary several years from now when they need to make their mark on the timeline to stave off the disaster. The sooner the better, I should think."

"We'll think about it."

At that moment, there was a knock on the door to the hospital room.

"May I come in?" a voice asked as an older woman's head peeked into the room. She looked to be in her mid-sixties with white on blonde hair and glasses. Harry thought she looked like a pleasant person.

"Auntie Minnie!" Hermione cried out as if she wanted to hug the woman, but Hermione never so much as left Harry's side.

"Hey there, 'Mione," she replied.

"You can call me that," Hermione whispered to Harry.

"Like Arwen better," he said smiling back and causing Hermione to giggle.

"My, my," Minnie said, "you told me Hermione had a friend. I do believe that's true as I cannot once remember a giggle passing her lips."

Hermione could not help but blush.

"Minnie," Rose said, "this is the new foster child we told you about. Horribly abused he was. This is Harry Potter."



The woman seemed to look at Harry in shock. She then seemed to transform in front of them. She grew a couple of inches and her face changed entirely. Her hair was now iron gray and it was hard to tell her true age. She stared at Harry as if she had seen a ghost.

"Not from Little Whinging," she said in shock.

"We found him there," Rose said, "he was in really bad shape. His Uncle abused him something terrible."

"That's impossible! Harry Potter is dead!"

"Interesting," Sensei said attracting the attention of everyone in the room except the newcomer. "Harry?"

"Yes Sensei?" Harry replied.

"Please ask Minerva McGonagall what makes her think you are dead. And be sure to use her name, Harry."

"Yes Sensei." He then turned to the woman. "My Sensei has asked me to ask you, Minerva McGonagall, why it is you think I am dead? Obviously, that is not the case."

"H-how did you know my name?" McGonogall asked.

"My Sensei just told me," Harry replied. "So, why do you think I died?"

It took a few moments for McGonagall to regain her composure. Something very different than anything she could recall was happening here. Whether it was good or not was as yet an unanswerable question. "Albus Dumbledore said you must have died," she replied. "It was the only thing that explained the collapse of the wards that protected you and the deaths of your relatives."

"Wards?" Harry asked Sensei.



“Special magical shields,” he replied. “They collapsed the moment your Aunt and Uncle signed you over to the Grangers. You can tell her that.”

Harry did as he was told. He also told her the fire that claimed his relatives was not magical.

“You know about magic?” McGonagall asked in shock.

“Sensei told Hermione and me about it,” Harry said. “Seems her parents already knew.”

“Who’s this Sensei you speak of?”

“You can’t see him?” Robert asked.

“He’s right there,” Rose added pointing at Sensei.

“I see nothing.”

“Sensei can only be seen by Harry and by those he trusts,” Hermione said. “He doesn’t know you yet.”

“I see. What is he?”

“He’s me,” Harry said. “Well a future me. He was sent back in time to find me and help me fix the timeline.”

“What’s wrong with it?”

Harry then repeated what Sensei told him. “Albus Dumbledore’s plans for me will lead to the extermination of the human race should I follow it.”

“But that’s...”

“Impossible? Hardly.” Harry’s voice paused as he slowly repeated what Sensei was saying. “Should this timeline continue unaltered in the important events, Albus Dumbledore’s Greater Good will lead to the end of the world for all. The magical world has three choices. First



off, it can discard its archaic secrecy and rejoin the rest of mankind as equals, not as superiors. Second, it can cease to exist entirely. The third choice is to do as Albus wants and lead the entire world to ruin. Albus cannot be trusted with the fate of humanity. He accepts no counsel but his own and is obsessed with a prophecy he does not and cannot understand. He never studied that magic. Yet he places faith in it anyway. He will lead the world to its ruin.”

“I...”

“For the sake of mankind, Minerva, I am dead. You will not tell Albus otherwise. He will lead us to ruin if he has his way and removes me from the Grangers’ care. My Sensei told me to tell you this. He knows what the future has in store for us all if we do as Dumbledore wants. So long as the magical world believes I am dead, I am safe as are the Grangers. Do you understand?”

“No. I do not. Albus has always had your best interests...”

“Has he?” There were longer pauses now as Harry listened to Sensei in stunned disbelief, yet he relayed the message just the same. “My parents and I would have been perfectly safe had we hidden at my ancestral home. But Albus could not find us there either so he set us up in one of his properties in Godrics Hollow. He told the world later that my Godfather was the Secret Keeper when he knew that was a lie. He knew that Peter Pettigrew had been the Secret Keeper because the enemy would assume it was my Godfather, Sirius Black.

“He allowed my Godfather to be sent to prison without a trial for what happened to my parents and what people thought happened to Pettigrew when, as presiding judge, he could have prevented the miscarriage of justice. But, if Sirius Black was a free man, I would have become his Ward. Dumbledore would not be able to control my future if I was Black’s Ward. So he saw to it Black was out of the picture and I was sent into slavery with my Aunt and Uncle.”

“Slavery?”

“I’m in this bed in this hospital for a reason. The Grangers are my parents now for a reason. My Uncle beat me to within an inch of my



life a few weeks ago. I've had beatings before as well. It was not the first time. Dumbledore knew of this and left me there. You know what the magical laws do to child abusers and those who fail to report it?"

McGonagall nodded.

"Dumbledore should be rotting in prison for his failures as my Magical Guardian, a position he stole from my Godfather. Do you really want to tell the facilitator of my torture that I am alive?" After there was no reply from McGonagall, Harry continued to relay Sensei's information. "I will attend Hogwarts, but not as Dumbledore's pawn. He and the rest of the Wizarding World will not know I am alive until you call me forward to be sorted. By then, he will be in no position to continue to ruin my life or to cast the world onto the path towards its destruction.

"Are you going to tell him I am alive?" There was fear in Harry's voice when he asked.

"No, Harry. I'm not sure if I believe everything you say. But I never wanted you to go to those brutes. I see now what that led to. I will keep your secret."

"Good. But as you doubt, ask yourself this question: How could my Godfather betray me? You know the magic behind that relationship. It is impossible for him to betray me or even place me at risk. To do so would have killed him. Yet he lives."

"You have a point."

"Will you tell Dumbledore that I am alive?"

"You don't want me to, do you?"

"No!"

"I won't betray you, Harry. I cannot."

"Why?"

"Because, in a way, you are part of my family now."



“What do you mean?”

Harry and Hermione then saw the three real adults gather together for a moment. They were clearly whispering about something. Soon, they broke apart and faced the two children.

“Hermione,” Minerva said, “we have something to tell you - and Harry now. It’s about your parents.”

A/N: A first cliffy?



## CHAPTER TWELVE: HERITAGE

SATURDAY, MAY 28, 1988 - ST. BARTHOLOMEW'S CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL, LONDON, U.K.

"M-my parents?" Hermione asked confused.

"Yes dear," Rose said. "You see, when I was a little girl I loved riding horses. My Daddy had a few at our place in the country. Mine was a lovely mare I named Shadow. I rode her every chance I could.

"When I was sixteen, a friend and I went out riding. It was such a lovely spring day, I remember. I was enjoying the view and was not really paying attention to my horse, which was a mistake. I might have seen what spooked it and avoided the problem had I been paying closer attention. I certainly would have been ready for her reaction. She reared up suddenly and threw me off. I was impaled on a metal stake that was sticking up at the side of the trail.

"I almost bled to death. At the hospital, I had to undergo several operations to repair the damage and to remove organs that were damaged beyond repair. I lost my spleen, my left kidney and my uterus."

Hermione gasped.

"What's that?" Harry asked.

"It's where babies come from," Hermione said. "But that means, Mummys..."

"I could not have a baby after that riding accident."

"But that means your not my Mummys!"

"I did not give birth to you, Hermione, But I've raised you since you were a week old. You are my child and I do love you very much."

"I'm adopted?"



“Yes.”

Hermione looked horrified. “Why didn’t you tell me about this? Who were my real parents and why didn’t they love me?”

“Hermione,” McGonagall said, “there were reasons we waited to tell you. Reasons having to do with magic. Until you were told about magic, we could not tell you who your real parents were. I knew your real parents, as did your adoptive parents. Your real parents loved you very much. But they were young - too young to have a baby, and then there was the war. They believed you would be in great danger, just as they were. For your safety, they let the Grangers adopt you and raise you as their own. In turn, the Grangers let them remain a part of your life. They would have been here with us on the day we told you, but they were killed in the war, two weeks after your second birthday.”

“What do you mean they were a part of my life?”

“You may be too young to remember them, Sweetie,” Rose said, “but you knew them as ‘Annarin’ and ‘Uncare’, which was how you said Aunt Erin and Uncle Eric. We named them as your godparents and they visited you as often as they could.”

“Who were they,” Hermione asked. She was crying now and trying to bury herself into Harry who was sitting next to her on his bed.

“Your birth father was Eric Puckle,” Minerva said. “He was a Muggle Born wizard - a very good one in every sense of the word. He met your birth mother at Hogwarts. You know what Muggle Born means?”

Hermione nodded. “No magical parents.”

“Do you know what Pureblood means?”

Hermione nodded.

“Your mother was Erin Ryan. She was from a very old magical family, although not strictly a Pureblood. Her father was David Ryan, another



Muggle Born Wizard. Her mother was Miranda McGonagall - my daughter."

There were two gasps: Hermione and Sensei.

"So I'm - I'm your Great-Granddaughter?" Hermione asked.

McGonagall nodded.

"Why was I put up for adoption then?"

"I could not raise you. I was and am Deputy Headmistress at Hogwarts. There really is little precedent for raising children at the school. I had three children of my own, they all had children too. Your mother was the youngest of three children. However, when you were born, your mother was the only one of my children or grandchildren who was still alive. She was the youngest of all of them and was still in school, safe for the most part from the ravages of the war. All the others had been killed by then.

"Your mother and father were sixteen when you were born. They were given a choice in regards to you. They could either quit school to raise you or, given that there were no relatives to take you in, put you up for adoption. They were exceptional students and did not want to skip their last two years at school so they agreed to an adoption provided they could still play at least some part in your life. They asked me to arrange it and, before you were born, I met the Grangers. They knew about magic and I knew of them through a friend - including that they could not have a child of their own and were looking to adopt.

"Eric and Erin really hoped the Grangers would take you. They were Muggles, thus you would not be living in the magical world and therefore you might be safe from the war which we were losing at the time. They also knew about magic and as we all knew you would be magical, we wanted a family that would not think ill of you because of your gifts."

"How did my parents die?" Hermione asked.



"It was a few months after they had finished Hogwarts," McGonagall said. "They married the weekend after they finished and joined the Auror Corps to fight He-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named and his Death Eaters."

"Who?"

"Voldemort," Sensei said.

"Voldemort," Hermione parroted surprised that McGonagall gasped.

"We normally do not say his name," McGonagall said.

"Why not?"

"I really don't know. We just don't."

"That's silly. It's just a name."

McGonagall nodded. "I suppose. Anyway, your birth parents joined the Auror Corps. One thing that was being done at that time was that when you joined up, the Ministry for Magic checked your heritage. We now know that the head genealogist and several of his clerks were in league with the enemy. The enemy was seeking to wipe out certain bloodlines - certain very old blood lines. You and Harry were the last of two of those bloodlines, Hermione. We think that's why they killed Harry's entire family and ultimately tried to kill him as well.

"What bloodlines?"

"Have you been told about the founders of Hogwarts?"

Hermione nodded.

"You are the last magical heir of one of the founders, Hermione. Your honored ancestor was Rowena Ravenclaw."

"Bloody hell," Sensei said.

"You did not know that?" Harry and Hermione asked.



“Hermione never told me,” he said. “Then again, maybe she never knew.”

“Why not?”

“Ask them when they planned on telling you this, Hermione.”

She did.

“Our plan was to tell you after you finished Hogwarts,” Rose said. “We all agreed on that. You father and I, Minerva, your birthparents. Unless there was a reason to do so much earlier, we would wait.”

“And I was not to tell her without the others,” McGonagall said. “That was the agreement.”

“Why wait?” Hermione asked.

“We felt it would be awkward if it were known that you were my Great-granddaughter while you were at school or that you were the heir to one of the founders.”

“That explains it,” Sensei said.

“How?”

“In my timeline, there came a time when My Hermione, a friend, and I had to go off on a long mission. My Hermione knew her parents were in grave danger at that point. Before we left, she modified their memories and sent them away to Australia under new names for the duration of the War. She didn’t know much about memory magic and botched the job. Her parents remembered her when she found them after the war, but little else about their life before she was born. I guess they had no memory of her true past.

“My Hermione believed she was Muggle Born her whole life. I don’t think the truth would have changed her. She was a champion of equal rights from a young age and I think that had everything to do with the Grangers.”



"The more you tell me about this magical world, Sensei," Hermione began, "the more I believe it needs to be dragged kicking and screaming into the modern world. Purebloods - bah!"

"I agree," Harry said.

"And that is something to strive for," Sensei said. "Now, why not one of you ask Ms. McGonagall why she knows that Hermione here is a magical heir of one of the founders?"

Hermione asked.

"Magical heirs differ from property heirs," McGonagall said. "Property passes from one generation to another by will - a document made by the parent that assigns his property to his family upon his death. If the parent dies without a will, property passes to the children in equal amounts.

"Magical heirs do not work that way. The magical heir of a witch must be a witch and the magical heir of a wizard must be a wizard. The magical heir is the oldest born witch of the witch mother or oldest born wizard of the wizard father. It then passes that way down the generations unless the entire line dies out - which has happened.

"But what if the witch has nothing but sons?" Hermione asked.

"The right of heirloom is held by the oldest son. Should he have a daughter, she becomes the heir at birth. When there is no living heir, but there is a living custodian of the right, the line is said to be magically dormant. This was the case many times for the line of Ravenclaw. I was the first heir in 200 years. My oldest daughter Augusta was heir apparent as was her oldest daughter Penelope. When they were killed, the heir apparent became my daughter Miranda then to her daughter Erin and upon her murder, it passed to her only daughter you, Hermione. As I am now too old to give birth to a new heir, the bloodline resides in you. Hence, you are now and have been since you were two years old, the magical heir of Rowena Ravenclaw. They killed my entire family except you. I had three children, eight grand-children and six great-grandchildren including



you. You're the only one left and were the only one left aside from your mother when you were born.

"This was a major reason why you were set up for adoption. He-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named was out to destroy any magical heirs of the other founders. From birth, you became a target for him. As you were adopted under non-magical law, there was no record of it for his followers to find and, therefore, no way for them to find you."

"So they wanted to kill me?" Hermione asked.

"Yes."

"Even though I was only a baby?"

"That never stopped them."

"So, in many ways, Harry and I am alike then? I mean we really are both orphans. Our parents were killed because of who we are. Our true natures were hidden from us because you adults either did not want to tell us or were afraid to, right?"

"That's a fair assessment."

"Except," Harry said, "your adoptive parents obviously love and care about you. The same cannot have been said for my relatives."

"Until you, Harry, I never had a friend."

"You're my first real friend too. My relations would not let me have friends."

"In my case, I either scared them with accidental magic, or they just didn't like me 'cause I was smarter than they were."

"I like it that you're smart, Hermione."

"Thanks Harry."



"I guess that even though we did not know much of anything about each other, we saw each other differently than any others we knew."

"You may be right, Harry. It's worth thinking about."

"Which leads us back, I hope, to the fact that Hermione here is a magical heir of a founder," Sensei said. As much as watching the growing friendship between the two young people pleased him, he could not maintain his visible self forever. Sensei heard a gasp and turned and saw McGonogall staring at him.

"I take it you can now hear and see me, Professor?" he asked.

She nodded. "You're real?"

Sensei laughed. "I guess that would depend upon your definition of real. I have no physical being, but I do believe I exist - as do some others in this room, am I right?"

"Yes Sensei," Harry and Hermione replied.

"You are far more real than Father Christmas," Hermione added. "Sorry Harry."

"For what? I never got presents so why would I believe in him?"

"You never got presents?" McGonagall asked.

Harry shook his head.

"Well, don't be surprised if you do from now on!" she declared.

"So," Sensei said, "we now know Hermione is the Heir of Ravenclaw."

"Yes," McGonagall said. "Last of her line, it would seem."

"So keeping her secret is important, yes?"

"It is."



“And Harry? What do you know about him?”

“That there was some prophecy that set Voldemort against him.”

“Indeed,” Sensei said. “But I have told Harry and Hermione that prophecy and we will discuss it further today. Suffices to say for now, that prophecy applied to two boys, not just Harry. No. Harry was target number one for Voldemort because he would have seen to it that Harry died anyway. He knew Harry was an heir of a Founder - specifically one Godric Gryffindor.”

“Really?” Harry and Hermione both asked.

“Truly,” Sensei replied. “He saw to it that the entire Potter line was wiped out - but messed up not killing you, Harry. The assaults on your grandparents, and your father’s younger brother and sister which led to their deaths were an attempt to eliminate the Gryffindor line. He did not kill them, but his Death Eaters did. Of the two boys to whom the prophecy he places so much weight in, he went after you first because you were already on his list.

“What he didn’t know and does not know, is that you’re not just the magical heir of one founder but two. One of the projects I will set the two of you on starting this summer is to trace the lines of all four founders to the present day bearing in mind the rules of magical inheritance. Few have done it properly. If anyone had, then they would know that you are also the magical heir - the true heir of Salazar Slytherin.”

“What?” McGonagall said. “But that cannot be true!”

“Why not? He lived over a thousand years ago.”

“Because everyone knows that he and his descendants were Dark!”

“That’s a lie,” Sensei said, “a myth perpetuated in Pureblood legend and in the minds of those who consider themselves light. Slytherin was not a Dark Wizard - grey for certain, but not black. Then again, all of the Founders were grey - neither dark nor light. The distinction



is a fabrication designed by both sides of this puzzle to prove their case, but each is entirely without evidence..."

"And their claims then are without any merit," Hermione offered.

"Precisely! Salazar Slytherin left Hogwarts why?"

"His wife died in childbirth," Harry said. "His heart was broken."

"Exactly. The legend is he left after a fight about whether they should teach magic to Muggle Borns. Lies! Pureblood lies!

"Now, Salazar had two sons, his two oldest children. His oldest was Edmund and Harry is the direct descendant of said Edmund. His second son was Harold, who would become Dark. Voldemort is his direct descendant."

"Then why does he think he's Slytherin's heir?" McGonagall asked.

"Because he believes the Pureblood lies," Sensei replied. "Edmund's line went dormant right from the first. He only had one daughter who bore children. She only had daughters and for almost twelve generations, there were nothing but daughters in the line. More over, each generation married a Muggle or Muggle Born. Purebloods believe the magical line dies if it is dormant for more than seven generations or if it sullies itself with Muggles for more than seven generations. Both are lies. Based upon those lies, however, Voldemort is right. His lineage only has one Muggle or Muggle Born in the line - his father. His line never went dormant for more than two generations. Still, his line is not the heir. Harry's is."

"How do you know this?" McGonagall asked.

"It was one of My Hermione's pet projects. Took her years, but she finally proved that all four founders had a magical heir at least in 1981. She proved I was the heir of two houses. She found that your granddaughter Erin was an heir when she passed away. My Hermione never learned that Erin had a daughter, never learned she was Erin's daughter. The Ravenclaw and Gryffindor lines were well known. They are well known, I should say. Slytherin's was not. It was



a well kept secret, enough so that Voldemort could make a case that he was the true heir when he was not. Hufflepuff was thought to have died out, but that's not true at all."

"So there is a fourth heir?" McGonagall asked.

"Indeed! Her line was dormant for over ten generations. Nothing but boys for almost three hundred years. She was born before Voldemort disappeared. She was and is the first girl in her family in centuries. She lives in thankful obscurity. She is..."

"Ginerva Weasley," McGonagall said.

"That is a good guess, but no. If it was, things may have worked out differently for me and everything. Ginny is six years old now. In my timeline, I made the huge mistake of marrying her. She never really loved me, she just loved my money and my fame. She was not a faithful wife and I cannot be sure if any of our children were mine. It's a real pity. She is or can be a decent person. But she set her sights on me and I fell for it..."

"Why did you marry her?" Hermione asked.

"I thought she loved me and that I loved her. I was wrong on both counts. It was only later, after she was killed in Voldemort's second return, that I realized I had married the wrong woman. The right one had been with me as a friend all along. I told you two to be totally honest with each other..."

"Wait," Hermione said, "you mean..."

"I don't know, Hermione," Sensei replied. "But yes, it's probable."

"What?" Harry asked.

"That you and I are supposed to one day..." Hermione began.

"You've got years to figure that one out," Sensei said. "All I am saying is that friends can be more than that one day. If you do develop



deeper feelings for each other, do not fear for your friendship. By then, it can probably survive anything, okay?"

"Okay," the two children said. They then glanced at each other and smiled and blushed furiously, a reaction that did not go unnoticed by the adults.

"Are you sure about this?" McGonagall asked. "All four founders heirs?"

Sensei nodded. "I was and still may have Harry and Hermione spend the next several months engaged in a history project - reconstructing the lineages. I am certain of the results, however."

"You do realize what this means?"

Sensei nodded. "If the four founders heirs arrive at Hogwarts and unite, I am quite aware at what can happen. Problem is Hufflepuff's heir. In my timeline, she and I and Hermione for that matter could have become friends, thus fulfilling the - er - reuniting of the founders lines. I liked her in a way. Hermione tolerated her and grew to respect her. She saw us as her friends, the first people to treat her as such after she came to Hogwarts.

"But a certain young witch prevented that friendship from truly blossoming. Odd, really, as young children they had been playmates. But Ginny Weasley wanted me as her husband and no woman would be allowed to stand in her way. She kept me - and Hermione for that matter - from allowing our friendship to grow with the final heir. From a very young age, she had been convinced that I was to be her husband. Her mother, a woman I considered as a mother to me, had convinced her that I and I alone was the only husband she should have. Any other girl - especially later when we were older - any other girl had to be discouraged from taking an interest in me in any way. My Hermione and I were dosed with love potions so we would fall in love with the people that would ensure that Ginny married me and no other. That was her mother's idea. Her mother is even now grooming her to be Mrs. Harry Potter. Dumbledore made some kind of promise to said Mrs. Weasley, and no I don't know what it was. That cycle



must be broken for the four heirs to unite. Ginny cannot be the disruption she became.”

“Do you have any idea how?”

“No.”

“Why is this important?” Harry asked. “Why separate the mother from her daughter?”

“The mother loves the daughter, she really does. The daughter adores her mother. But the mother is a Pureblood and the daughter is not born to wealth so an arranged marriage to a wealthy Pureblood is not an option. She sees Harry Potter as a mark. She knows he is ignorant of his wealth and she is a close personal friend - or so she believes - of Harry’s supposed magical guardian: Albus Dumbledore. Albus has blessed the supposed union as he considers the Weasley’s a family of the Light, and therefore not likely to allow our Harry to go dark or develop a spine as either would deny Dumbledore what he believes is Harry’s destiny.”

“And that is?” McGonagall asked.

“Dumbledore believes Harry must die a martyr’s death.”

“But that’s...”

“Outrageous? Insane? Pick a bad word for it and it probably is not evil enough. Dumbledore has misread everything when it comes to Harry here. Harry, in Dumbledore’s mind, must suffer. Had Dumbledore really understood the truth, Harry would never have been sent to be tortured - and he was - by his own relations. While Harry’s lot in life will not be easy, he’s not destined to die as Dumbledore believes is necessary. And Dumbledore does not accept counsel. His mind is made up, he believes the path is set and control of Harry is the key.

“But tables have turned on him, haven’t they. By now, the whole of the wizarding world believes Harry is dead, do they not?”

McGonagall nodded.



“And you understand why it may be a good idea for that to remain the case, at least until Harry arrives at Hogwarts in three years?”

McGonagall nodded. “But surely there is more? You must be aware how persuasive Dumbledore is, especially with the young? And what about the Weasley girl?”

“I and maybe some others will prepare Harry and Hermione so that they will be ready for whatever awaits them when they start Hogwarts. As for Ms. Weasley, with Harry here officially dead, her Mum now has to set her sights on another target for her daughter.”

“So you’re saying we should stay away from this Dumbledore and those Weasleys?” Harry asked.

“I can see how I left you with that impression,” Sensei replied. “That was not my intent. The Weasleys are, by and large, some of the nicest and most caring people you can hope to meet and are fun to be around. The youngest two had issues in my timeline. Near as I can figure, those issues began to develop when their mother became overly interested in trying to land me as a future son-in-law, a process that began only within the last year or less. Her constant jabber about the famous Harry Potter and oh, what a poor lad he was and such was largely ignored by the older children. The daughter became enamored with the legend and the son intimidated by and, ultimately, jealous of it.

“But for those traits, Ron and Ginny Weasley would have grown to be quite decent people. Because of those traits, they grew to be miserable, petty and unhappy. It took years of their mother’s talk to change their lives for the worse. For Ginny, years of her Mum’s quite vocal daydreams of the day her daughter married the rich and famous lad. For Ron, years of constant comparison to the aforementioned lad in which Ron would believe he always came up short.”

“That’s terrible!” Hermione said.



"It would have been far worse if it was intentional on the mother's part. Near as I could tell, it was not. Just a quirk, not malice.

"As to Dumbledore, given a chance, he will try and control and mold Harry's future to fit his preconceived notions. He is secretive, prefers to know more than those around him, is certain of his vision and, as I said, does not truly listen to those around him who are in disagreement. In short, he is old and set in his ways. Deep down, he is not an evil or malicious man and, properly led, can be quite useful. Just beware that he has an agenda for Harry and, despite his beliefs, that agenda is not in Harry's best interest although he believes it is.

"The purpose of my planned training for Harry and Hermione is to develop the skill sets necessary so that they do not have to rely upon Dumbledore as I did and to learn to think for themselves such that they do not have to follow his lead blindly as I did. It was my faith in Dumbledore and his plan and in his being right that, more than anything, led to the future I am now here to try and prevent."

"I take it you grew to mistrust Dumbledore?" McGonagall asked.

"No, not so much. Certainly not when he was alive. Years after his death, as the world began to spin out of control, I began to truly understand his faults and how they had led me to where I was. His faults were largely philosophical in nature and I was not surprised to learn he had never studied that topic in any detail."

"What do you mean?"

"First off, he could not envision any situation that justified killing another person. He seemed to hold to the common misconception that many of the faithful have that killing a person is a mortal sin. In English, one of the Ten Commandments in the Bible is 'Thou shalt not kill.' That misconception is derived from a mistranslation of the original Hebrew by the Greeks and carried through in Latin and later English. The Hebrew word was not 'kill,' it was 'murder,' the unlawful and unjustified taking of life. Big difference. The ancient Greek did not distinguish between those two words. Despite being thrown into two major wars with Voldemort, Dumbledore refused to kill or allow any of his followers to do so. Noble, indeed, but neither pragmatic nor



realistic when your enemy is trying to kill you. War is about killing and the only trustworthy enemy in war is a dead one.

“Secondly, he was a firm believer in redemption, again noble. But he never met a man no matter how evil whom he thought could not be redeemed. That is foolish. Should we give others a second chance? Indeed we should. But there comes a point when the person has had too many second chances and continues to do what they will rather than what they should. There is an old expression he never understood - fool me once, shame on you, fool me twice shame on me! There comes a point when a person cannot and should not be forgiven.

“Third, he had no vision for a future beyond Voldemort, or if he did, he never showed anyone that vision. Giving him the benefit of the doubt tells me he did, but I doubt it. He made no suggestions for any changes in society in the post-Voldemort world. The conditions that led to Voldemort’s rise remained unchanged: the Pureblood elitism, the outright discrimination based upon heritage, the fear and loathing of the rest of mankind, the rampant corruption throughout the magical government, the flagrant injustice. To avoid the terrible future, the Wizarding World could not return to the status quo ante, it had to cease to exist in its old form altogether. There had to be a revolution of ideas leading to an egalitarian society wherein such ideas as blood purity could find no acceptance or purchase. Concepts such as arranged marriage should have been outlawed. Promotion and success should have been based upon what you did, not who your parents were or how big a bribe you could pay. Basically, the post-Voldemort wizarding world had to become something totally unrecognizable from any magical society that had preceded it.

“Finally and most significantly insofar as Harry is concerned, very late in his life he developed a surprising interest in an area of magical study he had neither studied nor ever had any use for before: divination.”

“What?” McGonagall asked in disbelief. “That subject is useless! He knows it is.”

“What is Divination?” Harry asked.



“Fortune telling,” Sensei replied. “It is the false belief that one can predict the unpredictable - that being the future. Do you recall our discussion on Chaos Theory the day we first met, Harry?”

Harry nodded. “I recall you saying that a butterfly flapping its wings might lead to rain far away or something like that.”

“And what does that mean?”

“A small event that no one would notice can lead to something major in the future.”

“Exactly! By my delaying you from leaving the library, who knows how big a change to the timeline has occurred! I had no idea what would happen, I just hoped you would be found and cared for. Sure enough, you were! I would never have guessed you would meet Hermione and become friends three years before I did in my timeline. I wish I could tell you where this will lead, but I cannot. Divination by its very nature cannot take into account the infinite interactions that lead from the present to some future event. Hence, it is useless in reality.

“Yet Dumbledore hear the prophecy I mentioned last week and believes it as the truth.”

“A prophecy?” McGonagall asked, clearly shocked. “Those are wholly unreliable!”

“I agree.”

“What was this prophecy?”

“Harry? Did you and Hermione do the homework I assigned to you?”

“Yes Sensei.”

“Then tell us the prophecy!”



## CHAPTER THIRTEEN: ANALYSIS OF PROPHECY

SATURDAY, MAY 28, 1988 - ST. BARTHOLOMEW'S CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL, LONDON, U.K.

"The One with the power to vanquish the Dark Lord approaches," Harry began, reading from notes that Hermione had retrieved from her book bag. "Born to those who have thrice defied him, born as the seventh month dies... And the Dark Lord will mark Him as his equal, but he will have power the Dark Lord knows not... And either must die at the hands of the other for neither can live while the other survives."

"And the two of you have been thinking about it and discussing it with each other?" Sensei asked.

Harry and Hermione nodded. "And using the dictionary a lot," Harry added. "And that book that sounds like a dinosaur."

"A thesaurus," Hermione giggled.

"So what do you think it means?" Sensei asked.

"It's rubbish," Harry said.

"Could mean anything," Hermione added.

"In order to come up with any meaning, you have to assume things."

"To many things."

"For example?" Sensei asked.

"The One," Harry said.

"All we can know for certain it 'the One' is a male," Hermione added. "We have to assume it's a human or, better yet a wizard. For all we know it's a lion."

"Or a dragon," Harry added.



Hermione giggled. "Harry likes the dragon idea."

"And 'power' could mean loads of things as well," Harry said. "All this tells us is the 'One' has it and this Dark Lord thingie knows it not. What kind of power? And the word is even more - ambiguous, Hermione told me - as it could mean a single power or many."

Hermione then began listing things and seemed to be counting off on her fingers. "Physical? Mental? Intellectual? Magical? Economic? Political? Military? Electrical? Nuclear? Athletic? Charismatic? Persuasive? Logic? Er -" Hermione then blushed.

"Sexual," Harry continued reading from their notes, "romantic, comedic, creative, literary, musical, destructive, constructive, deceptive, manipulative, cunning, stealth, love, the ability to make friends and influence people? The list could be endless."

"Vanquish," Hermione went on, "that could have several meanings as well such as: kill, defeat, drive away, scare away, frustrate and it could apply to the physical being, ideas, beliefs, philosophies and who knows what."

"Excellent," Sensei said. "Continue."

"Is the title 'Dark Lord' unique to Voldemort?" Harry asked.

"He used it, or at least his followers did," Sensei said, "but no. That mantle has been placed on many a leader or want-to-be leader of evil witches and wizards throughout history."

"So it could mean a Dark Lord who has yet to show his ugly mug?"

"Indeed it could," Sensei said with a grin.

"And approaches is wooly as well," Hermione added. "I mean honestly? Physically approaches? Is coming soon to a theater near you approaches?"

Harry laughed. "I liked that one."



“Approaches in time? Is growing in his power approaches? Could mean anything!”

“Very good. Next?” Sensei said encouraging his students.

“The next two phrases suggest birth,” Harry said. “As in I was born on my birthday. But that too is an assumption. I mean a legend can be born at some other time when others recognize him as a legend, right? There are other meanings as well, but these two result in far different interpretations given the rest of the words.”

“The ‘One’ was ‘born to those’,” Hermione continued. “This could mean parents. But it could also mean family, clan, community, country, a whole bunch of thoses. So, he could have been given birth physically or metaphysically by parents, family, clan, community or whatever, couldn’t he?”

“Thrice is certain,” Harry said, “or as certain as any word in this waffle can be - three times.”

“Defied him is not,” Hermione continued. “Defied has a bunch of possible meanings and him could mean either the One or the Dark Lord!”

“Born as the seventh month dies is perhaps the most clear statement in this entire thing,” Harry went on. “The obvious choice is the end of the seventh calendar month. What calendar, though? July as we know it? But what if it’s the old roman calendar - that would mean late May or early June to us. What about the Celtic one - early July then...”

“The seventh month in the Celtic calendar, Duir. ends on July 7th in our calendar,” Hermione added.

“And all of this assumed a calendar is involved at all,” Harry said after smiling at Hermione then sticking his tongue out, to which she replied in kind. “I mean, it could mean the seventh month after some unspecified date of significance other than the beginning of a new year.”



“Excellent!” Sensei said. “Next?”

“And the Dark Lord will mark his as his equal,” Harry continued. “Well, we know this means some Dark Lord and whoever or whatever the One is, but mark as equal? Is this a physical mark? A tattoo? Is it a sign? A ring? A badge? Or is it more symbolic?”

“As in?”

“Well, let’s assume we are talking wizards, which there’s no clue whatsoever that such is the case. If a powerful wizard took on an apprentice or declared another his heir or something like that, would not that show that the other might be said powerful wizard’s equal in his eyes?”

“Bloody hell!” Sensei exclaimed. “I’ve been thinking about this rubbish for over one hundred and fifty years and I never considered that! That’s brilliant, Harry!”

Harry blushed. “Thank you,” he said softly.

“But he will have power the Dark Lord knows not,” Hermione went on, “and we are once again faced with the One, the Dark Lord and power, all of which have too many possible meanings. Next bit is the statement that this Dark Lord does not know the power the One has. What does that mean? Lacks knowledge? He does not believe in it? Ignorance? Intellectual incapability of grasping the concept? Does not understand or refuses to? It’s over his head? Could this be some non-magical power? Do wizards understand guns, for example?”

“Most do not,” Sensei said.

“So it could be technology, couldn’t it? But, then again, it could be anything.”

“Very good,” Sensei smiled.

“And either must die at the hands of the other,” Harry went on, “This one seems clear, but it’s not. It would seem to define the term



'vanquish' but it does not. The only thing that seems certain is one of them will die and the other will be the cause of that death. The clear reading suggests a duel. That's what I thought at first.

"But then I remembered one of the only movies my Uncle let me see on the telly. It was "The Battle of Britain" about the Germans trying to bomb England and the Royal Air Force trying to stop them. Bombs killed people on the ground, but they were dropped from so high up that the Germans could not see who they killed. Yet did they not have a hand in the killing? Did not the pilot have a hand by flying the plane to London? Did not the bombardier when he dropped the bombs? Did not the fighter pilots when they protected the bombers from being shot down?

"A general plans a battle yet does not take part, does he not have a hand in the deaths that follow? A bad guy hires an assassin to kill a rival, does he not have a hand in that death? I read a book recently on the Norman Conquest. William was losing the Battle of Hastings when one of his archers got lucky and hit Harold Godwinson - leader of the Anglo-Saxons - in the eye, killing him. The Anglo-Saxons soon fled the field. Did not William have a hand in Harold's death? Did not that archer have a hand in the conquest of England? The phrase does not necessarily mean to kill personally, but merely bring about the death of the other."

"Outstanding!" Sensei said. "And the last bit?"

"For neither can live while the other survives," Hermione said. "Harry and I agree this is the only bit that is not totally open to interpretation, but it still has more than one meaning."

"One is that they both will die," Harry said.

"But why the terms 'live' and 'survive'?"

"We figured these words were not chosen at random," Harry explained. "Survive means 'live' as in to be alive physically. I survive so long as I still breathe, right?"



“But,” Hermione added, “live can mean far more than just breathing. It can mean to have hopes and dreams and desires and ambitions and have the opportunity to bring them about.”

“So we figure,” Harry went on, “that what this means is each of them has some plans for the future, but neither of their plans can come about unless the other of them is dead and buried.”

“It’s the only bit of the whole puzzle that can have a somewhat certain meaning,” Hermione finished.

“Put it altogether and what do you have?” Sensei asked almost beaming.

“Honestly,” Hermione said, “you can have anything. It is what the hearer wants to think it is.”

“Yeah,” Harry nodded. “Rubbish is what it is.”

“Top marks to both of you!” Sensei said.

“How old are you, Harry?” McGonagall asked? Her tone suggested she was clearly impressed with both of the children.

“I’ll be eight at the end of July,” Harry said.

“I am impressed! I have students ten years older than you who would not have analyzed that nearly as well!”

“Good job, you two,” Robert Granger added. Harry and Hermione beamed.

“You taught them that in two weeks?” Rose asked.

“My primary goal is and shall be to teach them critical reasoning,” Sensei said. “Do not take things at face value. Stuff like that. They read something and they should look for what’s missing and then set off and try and find it. That’s how you truly learn! Not by regurgitating what someone else has written but by following the path and drawing your own conclusions from the information. I honestly did not expect



that degree of reasoning from them so soon and so young. Gives me hope for the future in this timeline, provided this skill continues to develop.”

“And what about your homework?” Rose asked looking at her daughter.

“Sensei has made it clear that our regular school work takes priority over our new magical studies,” Hermione replied.

“Her homework is done,” Harry added. “And I’ll have all my course work for the rest of the year finished in a few days. And Hermione’s been helping me learn the math she’s learned this year so maybe I won’t have to take summer school to skip a year and be in Hermione’s class next fall. That’s my goal, anyway.”

After a pause as the adults all seemed to look at one another for some reason, Hermione asked: “So this Dumbledore believes this Prophecy? I mean it’s so vague. What does he think it means?”

“Dumbledore is not the only one,” Sensei said. “A spy overheard it as it was made - not all of it, mind you - but none the less. Voldemort, unlike Dumbledore, always had a thing for Divination, so he took it on faith alone, it seems.

“The One with the power to vanquish the Dark Lord approaches. Born to those who have thrice defied him, born as the seventh month dies. That’s the bit Voldemort’s spy overheard and the bit he acted upon. The Prophecy was made in the fall of 1979. Prior to then, Voldemort only feared two things: death and Dumbledore. But here was a genuine Prophecy that said Dumbledore was not the problem. Voldemort saw this as a sign that he would die and his killer would be a boy born at the end of July of the coming year to a fairly specific set of parents.

“Two young couples fit the bill. They were both Aurors and they had both fought Voldemort in person three times and lived to tell the tale, as it were. The two wives were pregnant and due around the end of July of that year and he knew as much from his spies. Neither they nor he knew if their child would be a boy, and as the One was a male,



he bided his time to see. He knew the Prophecy meant nothing - yet - if the children were girls.

“Dumbledore also saw it the same way. Rather than take a wait and see attitude, he immediately sent the two couples off into hiding using all the magic he knew to keep them safe. Whereas Voldemort wished to determine his target, Dumbledore wished to protect his friends regardless. Besides, Dumbledore had heard the entire Prophecy and knew that it was meaningless unless Voldemort ‘marked’ the child as an equal. The problem was for both families that Dumbledore had allowed or would allow the secret of their locations to leak once if both mothers gave birth at the end of July and both children were boys. He was willing to risk the lives of two entire families to see who Voldemort ‘marked’ as an equal.

“Frank and Alice Longbottom’s son Neville Longbottom was born the night of July 30th, 1980. James and Lily Potter’s son Harry James Potter was born the morning of July 31st, 1980. Harry became prime target number one once the two birth announcements were made in the papers on August 1st.”

“Why?” Harry asked.

“You were the son of the Heir of Gryffindor and would have been a target for death anyway. Throw in the Prophecy, you were prime target, although as soon as you were dealt with, Voldemort would have killed Neville as well, just to be certain. As evil as that bastard was, he seldom killed people other than his own followers. You and Neville would be different. His attacks on your family and Hermione’s and Minerva’s had, until then, all been the work of his followers. You and Neville would be different.

“Dumbledore believed that the Prophecy required that Voldemort ‘mark’ one of the children as his equal. Both couples were living in houses protected by what is known as a Fidelius Charm. The charm creates a protective ward that hides a location from anyone unless the one person entrusted with the location, known as the Secret Keeper, tells them. Even then, unless you are the Secret Keeper, you cannot tell or be forced to reveal the location to anyone. However, the



Charm does not prevent the Secret Keeper from betraying the secret if they so choose."

"Sirius Black," McGonagall growled.

"No, Minerva," Sensei said, "not Sirius. You forget Sirius was Harry's godfather and the magic that such status entails."

"The magic would still allow him to betray James and Lily!"

"True, but not if there was any chance that Harry might come to harm. Giving up Harry's location would have been impossible. Even if Sirius wanted to - and he did not - he would have died before a word left his mouth!"

"But he was the Secret Keeper!"

"And who told you that?"

"Albus," her voice then faded.

"Indeed," Sensei said. "As he would. But Black was not the Secret Keeper. True, he was the logical choice. James and Lily wanted him to be it. But, as everyone probably knew or would suspect Black would be the Secret Keeper, at the last minute Harry's parents agreed to use someone else. Thus, Peter Pettigrew was made Secret Keeper. He was a coward and a Death Eater by then. Still, it took him over a year to finally get to spill his secret to Voldemort, still..."

"But Black murdered Pettigrew!"

"I can assure you that the rat is alive and well as an innocent man rots in prison still awaiting a trial that shall never occur."

"How is that possible?"

"Were you aware that James Potter, Sirius Black and Peter Pettigrew became unregistered animagus in their fifth year?"



“What’s an animagus?” Hermione asked. Barely a second after she uttered the words, McGonagall transformed into a tabby house cat.

“That is an animagus,” Sensei said. “It’s really complex magic, but for the few who master it, they can turn into a specific animal at will and back, even without a wand. But, they cannot pick the animal, it’s more like the animal picks them. The Native Americans call it the Spirit Animal. For Harry’s father it was a stag - bloody brilliant one. Twelve pointer at least. Would have had Muggle deer hunters drooling to take him down! Sirius Black was a large, black, Irish Wolfhound. Pettigrew was a common rat. Fitting in hindsight. The three learned it because their fourth friend was and is a werewolf. As humans, when the full moon arrived, their friend was exceedingly dangerous. As animals, however, he was quite safe and they could keep him company and safe when he suffered through his monthly ‘little furry problem’ as they called it.”

McGonagall transformed again back into her true self. “I find this hard to believe.”

“I understand,” Sensei said. “You have how many Weasley boys in school?”

“Three. Bill is a sixth year, Charlie a fourth and Percy is in his first,” McGonagall answered

“As I recall, a student is allowed a pet or familiar?”

“True.”

“But, if we are talking a pet and not a familiar, without special dispensation from the Headmaster, we’re talking about either an owl, a cat or a toad, right?”

McGonagall nodded.

“Yet, fair bet, one of the Weasley boys has a pet rat?”

She nodded again.



“Against regulations,” Sensei added.

“The Headmaster bowed to allow it, given the Weasley’s financial limitations.”

“I’m certain that’s Pettigrew. No. The Weasleys have no idea. I suggest you inspect the rodent. You will find it is missing a toe on its left paw and a simple magic revealing charm should show that it is not what it seems. Expose the rat and Harry’s innocent godfather will be free.

“But, I would advise you do not do this with Dumbledore’s knowledge.”

“Why not?”

“Right now, Harry is legally dead in the magical world, am I not mistaken?”

“No. He is dead, legally speaking.”

“Dumbledore is head of the Wizengamot - the magical Parliament and Court of Law, correct?”

McGonagall nodded.

“When Harry’s parents died, there was a Will. In that Will, Sirius Black was named as Harry’s legal and magical guardian at law. He would act as Harry’s parent. But, two days after the murder of Harry’s parents, he was involved in the incident that landed him in prison without trial for the non-murder of the rat Pettigrew. All issues of Guardianship then passed to the Head of the Wizengamot as a matter of law because Harry had no living magical relations. The Potter Will was ignored, as it stated that Harry was to be placed for adoption with a suitable magical family rather than being placed into the custody of his maternal Aunt so long as she remained married to her husband. The Will was ‘conveniently’ ignored by the Courts, who deferred to Dumbledore on such issues.”

“Why?” Harry asked.



Sensei shrugged. "Honestly, I never found out. By the time I seriously began looking into the circumstances of my parents' death, as opposed to simply taking the word of others on it, the key witnesses were all dead. Giving Dumbledore the benefit of the doubt, for I liked the man, the times were chaotic. Black was to have been your guardian, but he was imprisoned without a trial, as was common at the time for suspected supporters of Voldemort. As you were orphaned, you became the Ward of the Wizengamot, which meant for all practical purposes, Dumbledore. And he believed that the circumstances of your parents' death - in particular your mother's - could provide greater protection than any other magical protections known. Your mother sacrificed her life trying to save you, Harry. Your father did as well, but as he had no living relative and your mother did, you were placed with the only blood relative you had left. Dumbledore then created what's known as a blood ward between you and your Aunt. Thus, for so long as you lived with your Aunt, the blood sacrifice of her sister protected you from magical attack."

"A blood ward?" McGonagall asked. "They're illegal!"

Sensei nodded. "But also practically foolproof. Once the ward was set, no one, not even Dumbledore knew where you were."

"That's why!" Harry said. "I've been wondering why no one checked on me!"

"Albus had devices in his office he said were tied into Harry and the Wards," Minerva said.

Sensei nodded. "My guess is he placed certain monitoring charms on Harry before setting up the wards. This would allow Dumbledore to monitor his general health, magic and to allow for him to receive approved owl post in time, without defeating the wards themselves. And let's not forget Mrs. Figg."

"Mrs. Figg?" Harry asked. "What about her?"

"She's a squib - a non-magical born to magical parents. And she's a friend of Dumbledore. She would not have been affected by the



Wards so she could serve as Dumbledore's eyes. The wards prevented him from finding you - and any other magical - at least until you obtained a wand. It's a very powerful protection, Harry. My guess is that following the night of the attack, Dumbledore was convinced that Harry, known to magical Britain as 'The Boy Who Lived' was the One mentioned in the Prophecy."

"Why?"

"That scar on your forehead," Sensei said. "Voldemort gave you that when he tried to kill you. He used a terrible curse that always kills its victims, and yet it did not kill you. Moreover, it destroyed Voldemort although no one really knows why. Dumbledore currently believes it was your mother's sacrifice that protected you, but that's not what really happened.

"Mark him as his equal," Harry said.

"Indeed. Prior to that night, Dumbledore did not truly believe that Prophecy. He acted because he knew that Voldemort did and two families - both friends with him - were in danger of being wiped out. After that night, however, he came to believe that the Prophecy was real. That was a mistake as no Prophecy is real - its truth lies solely within the eyes and imagination of the beholder. His next big mistake was to try and interpret the rest of the Prophecy. Again a mistake. He currently believes - or believed until you were reported dead - that you and you alone could defeat Voldemort. But, he also believes that the final part means you will not survive that battle."

"You mean I have to die?"

"That's what Dumbledore believes, Harry. But no, you do not. In my timeline I did ultimately kill that Voldemort creep and lived for more far than one hundred years following. But, in my timeline, Dumbledore was grooming me to become a martyr. I received little or no real magical training aside from what was taught to all the others at school. He could have seen to it I was trained to defend myself, and to fight. He did not. He all but discouraged it. After all, if I learned to fight, I might not die and he believed I had to die so that Voldemort could be destroyed for good. He was, is and will be wrong in that regard.



"If it were not for the fact that Voldemort believes in the Prophecy himself, you would not be his prime target. True, as a magical heir, you're still high on his list, but you top the list because of that Prophecy. When Voldemort regains a physical body - and he will - he is going to come after you."

"All because of a stupid Prophecy! This sucks!"

"Indeed. But, the one grain of real truth is that you are - or will be - one of the most gifted and magically powerful wizards alive. With training, taking down Voldemort will not be that hard for you. Even without it, I beat the bastard on several occasions, destroyed him physically four times and finally killed him."

"I guess it's a good thing the Prophecy is not real," Hermione began.

"Oh, it's real alright. What it is not is true. For any Prophecy to be true when made the future must both be predictable and set in stone. Neither of which are the case. Every Prophecy ever made that was later said to have come to pass is open to interpretation. Each can be picked apart and proven to be merely a matter of belief and not fact. That does not make them benign. People who act based upon those things, either to ensure they come to pass or to prevent them from coming to pass, create far more disruption than might have occurred had they done nothing.

"This Prophecy is a case in point! Voldemort acted based upon hearing only a part of it. Had he heard the whole thing, and in particular the bit about the Dark Lord marking his equal, I honestly doubt he would have killed your family, Harry. He would have avoided you - and Neville - like the plague for fear of creating the source of his own demise. He was on the cusp of winning the last war when he came for you, Harry. He could easily have found you and sent his minions to deal with you. But, he chose to do it himself thereby causing his own destruction and costing his side that First War.

"Dumbledore did not believe the Prophecy at first, but he knew that Voldemort believed and would come for you. When Voldemort did, when he 'marked' you, Dumbledore suddenly believed in Father



Christmas. The actions those two took regarding the Prophecy lit the slow match that in my timeline led to the destruction of the human race. Dumbledore was obsessed with fulfilling the Prophecy. In my time, this blinded him, clouded his judgment and impaired his ability to think clearly, leading to mistakes that fanned the fires to come. Now? Who knows? Harry was not supposed to die - yet. Maybe he will see the truth. Maybe. But I am not counting on it because even if he does, that does not guarantee he will avoid his greatest mistake and the one that most directly caused our doom as a species."

"And what is or was that mistake?" McGonagall asked.

"Later," Sensei said as the two children groaned. "As in this afternoon," he continued. "While I do not need the sustenance of food, the rest of you do. Lunch, and then we'll talk some more."

"Yes Sensei," the two children said in unison.

"I am interested in what you may have to say," McGonagall said. "But Dumbledore is summoning me for some reason. I'll try to get back by one-thirty."

"That should be fine," Sensei said. "It will allow the others a nice, casual lunch. And - er - Minerva?"

"Yes?"

"Not a word to Dumbledore about Harry, please?"

She nodded before leaving the room.

"Sensei," Hermione asked, "who is the magical heir of Hufflepuff?"

"Her name is Luna Lovegood. She was born in early September 1980 and is now seven years old. She lives outside a village called Ottery St. Catchpole in Devon, several hours from here by car."

"So we cannot stop by and see her?"

"Soon, maybe. Soon."



## CHAPTER FOURTEEN: FALLOUT

SATURDAY, MAY 28, 1988

While Harry, Hermione and the others were discussing magical heirs and prophecies in the hospital, the rest of Wizarding Britain was awakening and sitting down to their morning breakfast which invariably meant the morning paper. There were six magical dailies in the British Isles: The Manchester Owl Post, The Edinburgh Specter, The Irish Wizarding Daily Voice, The Birmingham Banshee, The Lancashire Guardian and The Daily Prophet. Of the six dailies, the Daily Prophet had by far the largest circulation. The front page headline of the Daily Prophet and accompanying article would send shockwaves throughout the entire country.

**DUMBLEDORE DROPS DUNGBOMB!  
BOY-WHO-LIVED DEAD!**

In a shocking turn of the cards, the Ministry for Magic and Wizengamot called a joint press conference last evening to reveal the worst news since the Dark Day's when You-Know-Who and his terrorists were at the height of their powers and predations. Albus Dumbledore, long term Headmaster of the prestigious Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry, Supreme Mugwump of the International Confederation of Wizards and Chief Warlock of the Wizengamot announced that sometime in the early morning of Wednesday last, Harry Potter, The-Boy-Who-Lived, who had saved us from ruin and darkness, died in a house fire in Surrey.

Potter, has largely only existed as a name and myth. Born to James and Lily Potter on July 31st, 1980, he has never been seen in public. There have never been any photographs of him in any paper or magazine. He was born in hiding, sought after as a target by He-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named. For the rest of us, theses past six and a half years, he has existed only as a name - the name of the baby who defeated the most evil wizard of the last four centuries. Few knew of his whereabouts during his first fifteen months of life. Fewer still have known since that horrible night that cost him his parents. While we celebrate October 31st, 1981 as the date when the baby saved us all from terror, for him it was the date he lost his family.



Dumbledore explained that for the last six and a half years, the most famous person in our world has been living with his only surviving relatives - Muggles! He had grown up ignorant of our world and ways and ignorant of his importance in our hearts.

Dumbledore explained that the gas lines in his muggle home ruptured that dreadful night. According to Muggle authorities, all in the house were overcome by the gas, which soon ignited burning the house to the ground. There were no survivors. Ironical, that the lad many believed was to become a most powerful wizard should be laid low by non-magical fire, an event almost unheard of in our world. But we were reminded, there were no wizards to protect him.

Dumbledore took full responsibility for the loss. He explained that despite the fact that his relations were Muggles, the house where he lived was protected by the most powerful wards known. The wards were somehow tied to him and his remaining family and were in place because Dumbledore believed that there may still be unrepentant Death Eaters or their fellow travelers among us who would seek to harm the boy. His sojourn in the Muggle wilderness was supposed to last only until the day he entered Hogwarts, a date still more than three years away.

Dumbledore admitted that following the death of Harry's parents and the subsequent arrest of his appointed guardian Sirius Black for mass murder, Dumbledore has assumed the role as Harry's magical guardian pursuant to the Law on Orphans as Head of the Wizengamot. Consequently, no responsibility can be laid at the door of the Ministry for Magic or our now long tenured Minister For Magic, The Honorable Millicent Bagnold.

"It was my fervent hope," Dumbledore explained, "that by placing Harry with relations in the Muggle world, he would have as normal a childhood as possible and be spared the adulation, trappings and temptations of his celebrity for as long as possible. We must never forget, he was a baby on that terrible day when he lost his parents. He surely has no memory of that event and could not tell you what happened. No one alive really knows. There are only four people in our world who have ever seen him in life. One sits in a cell in



Azkaban prison for the most heinous of crimes, not in the least of which being betraying that boy and his family to [You-Know-Who]. To lose such promising young boy in such an ordinary and mundane way is a tragedy.”

Auror Kingsley Shacklebolt was on the scene not long after the Muggle Fire Brigade. “It was an accident caused by a contaminated gas supply,” he said reading from the local Fire Inspector report. “For years, contaminants have been corroding the copper supply pipes throughout that area. Initial reports indicate that most every home or business in the area could have gone up the same way at any time.”

However, we all know that gas explosions and fires have been a convenient excuse used by the Ministry for years to cover-up magical attacks on Muggles. One is forced to wonder whether the loss of this innocent icon of hope, courage and resistance was not indeed done in by his former enemies.

Now he lives only in our memories, in the cold pages of our histories, in the scores of comics and childrens books written about him, and, of course, in the dashed hopes of - at last count - 345 families that have offered him open ended contracts to marry their daughters. (A record that may stand for centuries).

And of course none of these events or facts helps answer the other unanswered question from that night so many years ago: did Harry Potter have a younger sister? Rumors have circulated that Lily Potter gave birth to a daughter Clarice only weeks, if not days before that tragic night. Of course, no infant body was ever found at the Potter's hide-a-way and, as the building was left in ruins, there was no evidence of one, but the rumors persist to this day.

Given the clear cover-up regarding the location of the Boy-Who-Lived, one must assume that where there is smoke, surely there is a fire!

All of this surely brings into question whether Dumbledore has passed his prime. He was born in 1864 and, while 126 is hardly ancient, he is not as young as he once was. Perhaps the weight of his many responsibilities is finally taking its toll on the man who was been of such importance to Britain for over fifty years. Perhaps age



and wisdom failed him in the placement of our now lost National Treasure.

We can say so little really. Harry? We knew of you, but we never knew you.

A memorial service for Harry Potter will be held at St. Simon's chapel in Godric's Hollow at 10:00 A.M., Saturday, June 4th, where his remains shall be interred beside his parents. Due to the extensive burns, there will be no viewing. Dumbledore has requested that those intending to send memorial gifts should instead send donations to St. Mungo's Hospital or the Wizengamot Orphans' Fund in Harry's name.

Somewhere in Devon, outside a village named Ottery St. Catchpole, a middle aged man with red hair put down the paper. He had gone pale at the news. His plump, red-haired wife could not fail to notice. He was always quite jovial and she had not seen that expression on his face since the war. She was still occupied with serving breakfast to her four youngest children, a pair of red haired twin boys, a younger red haired boy, and the youngest, a red haired girl who was six years old.

"Arthur?" she asked. "What's the matter? I haven't seen you like this since..."

"Terrible, just terrible, Molly," Arthur said. He then rose from his chair, ignoring his breakfast and walked out the kitchen door into the garden beyond. His wife Molly had not seen him like this in years - but knew what must have caused it. Someone had been murdered! Someone they knew or knew of had been killed by - but he can't be back!

She looked at the paper and began to read. Within seconds she was crying. "No!"

"Mum?" one of the twins asked with concern. They were too young to remember the war and therefore had never seen their Mum cry before. To them, she had only two emotions really, happy, or screaming her head off at them. Molly put the paper down and placed her head in her hands sobbing silently. The younger boy picked up the paper looking for a picture, but there wasn't one.



“What do you think you’re doing, Ickle Ronnykins?” one of the twins said.

“Trying to read what this is,” the seven year old boy named Ron said.

“Waste of time mate,” the other twin replied. “We all know that despite Mum’s efforts, you still can’t read.”

“If it weren’t for your occasional magic, you’d be worse than a Squib,” the other twin replied.

“Well, I ain’t no Harry Potter,” the younger boy replied.

“That’s for sure,” his younger sister agreed. “Harry’s smart and brave and cute and not a prat and...”

“Oi!” Ron shot back, “no one’s ever seen him! For all you know the bloody garden gnomes are better looking! He might be a troll!”

“Anyone that famous must be good looking,” the girl said in defiance.

“Just ‘cause you think he’s your boyfriend...”

“He will be! You’ll see!”

“Shut it, you two!” one of the twins. “Hand me that paper, midget!” The twin practically tore the paper from Ron, “Seeing as you can’t read...oh, bugger.”

“What? Is it about Harry Potter,” the girl asked, “is it Fred?” She was beginning to sound excited.

“Yeah Ginny,” Fred said in a flat voice. “It’s about your dream boy.” He handed the paper to his twin.

“What’s it say, George? What’s it say?” Ginny begged practically hopping up and down in her chair.



It took George a while before he said anything for he read more thoroughly than did his twin brother Fred. "Harry Potter died in a house fire early Wednesday morning."

Ginny gasped and went pale.

"Brilliant," Ron said.

"What?" Ginny squeaked.

"Mum's always on me about how I am not Harry Potter and such. Well, so what? At least I'm alive!"

Ginny began to wail just before she ran out of the kitchen and up the stairs.

"Ronald!" Molly growled. "Go to your room! NOW!"

"What?" Ronald asked. "What I do?"

"You upset your sister! GO!"

"But I haven't even started breakfast!"

Molly raised her wand and Ron's food disappeared. "ROOM NOW! IF YOU'RE LUCKY, MAYBE YOU'LL HAVE LUNCH!"

Ron stomped off muttering to himself.

---

About three miles away, another family had sat down for breakfast. The father was short in stature and a little plump and balding with light brown hair, but always seemed to be in a good mood. He was reading the morning mail as his wife, a slightly taller blonde haired woman who was not hard on the eyes at all was finishing the meal at the stove. The father looked up just as their only child, a six-year old girl with long, blonde hair and eyes that always expressed wonder walked into the room. Her father thought she seemed to float and had



told her that she was blessed by the Nitzie Fares, the beneficent fairies of legend.

“Morning Daddy,” the little girl said happily.

“Morning, Luna Love,” the father replied.

“Good mail?”

“Three sightings! Three!” the father replied.

“Why can’t we ever see them, Daddy? I’d love to see a Crumple Horned Snorkack.”

“I’m sure we could have Love. My guess is the Nargles that seem to find us enjoyable cloud our minds at the most inopportune times.”

“I suppose,” the girl pouted ever so briefly. “Mummy?”

“Be with you two in a moment,” the woman laughed quietly. “Just finishing the bacon.”

“Why can’t we have pudding?”

“Luna,” the mother sighed, “a growing girl like you needs more than just pudding.”

“I suppose,” Luna frowned. “But I do like pudding.”

“Indeed you do, My Angel,” the mother replied as she brought their breakfasts to the table. “Now tuck in!”

“Looks wonderful, Dear,” the man said.

“You always say that, Xeno,” she replied.

“I always mean it, Marla. Spell crafting today?”

“No Love. The garden needs tending and I know you need to complete this week’s issue. So you really have three sightings?”



"Indeed. One's even been seen in the Orkney's, although that was months ago according to the letters. Must have been a juvenile. Male most like, as they are known to wander a bit until they find a harem to tie them down."

"Harems tend to do that," she replied as she picked up the paper.

"Must you read that pack of lies?" he asked.

Marla looked at her husband. "It's always wise to keep an eye on the competition, don't you think?"

"Which is one of a million reasons why I married you," Xeno said. "With all the stories I can follow..."

"I understand. Still..."

"I know you think much of what I print is not worth the ink, Love, but..."

"It makes you happy. People buy it and we do okay. Just 'cause I don't follow you to find Snorkacks and such..."

"And what about the Clarice Potter situation?"

"No proof she's in the Department of Mysteries as an ongoing experiment."

"Nor would there be, would there! Everyone believes her brother exists, yet no one has ever seen him. If he truly exists, so does Clarice! I mean, we are talking about a department that everyone knows about but no one knows who's in it and what they truly do. Then there's this Harry Potter nonsense! They write me off, but has anyone ever actually seen this Boy-Who-Lived?"

"Not that I am aware..."

"Yet the masses believe in him! Surely he must be real!"



“And Clarice?”

“You know as well as I do, Love. There’s just as much proof about Harry Potter as there is about his rumored sister. One might argue there’s more proof about the elusive Snorkack as there have been unconfirmed sightings.”

“I think Harry Potter is real,” Luna said.

“And why’s that, Love?” Marla asked.

“Everyone says he is,” Luna said. “He may not truly exist, but he is still real in a sense because people believe in him.”

“And Clarice?”

“Donno.”

Marla sat down and began to read the paper. “Oh my!” she said in surprise.

“What is it?” her husband replied, “did they catch good ol’ Millicent with her fingers in the till?” Xeno did not think too highly of the government in general or the current Minister for Magic in particular - or any other politician for that matter.

“No. According to this, Harry Potter died a few days ago!”

“Really? How?”

“He was living with Muggle relatives and their house burned down.”

“What on earth was he doing with Muggles?”

“Dumbledore left him with them.”

“Crazy old coot!”

“That poor boy,” Luna added.



“Does that paper say anything about Clarice Potter?” Xeno asked.

“Only more of the same. She’s a rumor.”

“Well, if that poor boy is really gone, maybe she won’t be for long. I’ll talk to my contacts at the bank and see if the Potter Vault has been re-designated.”

“I’m surprised you ever get any information from them,” Marla smiled. Xeno was considered a fringe reporter but he was the only one who had any actual information regarding the inner workings of Gringotts, the main bank for all of Wizarding Britain.

“That’s because they know I never print any of the information. Just use it to confirm my hunches.”

Marla smiled at her somewhat batty husband as she began on her breakfast.

---

The normally boisterous breakfast for students and staff at Hogwarts quickly became subdued as the papers circulated around the Great Hall. It was true that no one present had actually seen Harry Potter, but he was a legend. Now, it seemed, the legend was gone. There were children present whose families had been torn apart by the War that had claimed Potter’s family and many saw Potter as a beacon for a hopeful future. A dark cloud seemed to pass overhead as that beacon was now gone.

Albus Dumbledore noticed the somber mood as he entered to take his meal at the head of the Staff Table. Having given the interview, he knew the cause of the odd behavior of his nearly four hundred charges. Many eyes followed him, some in disbelief and others in clear disappointment. He had, after all, publicly accepted responsibility for the circumstances leading to the legend’s death. He sighed quietly as he took his seat.



"Is this true, Headmaster?" a tall man dressed in black with equally black hair and a face that looked like it never knew humor asked.

"I am afraid so, Severus."

"So it was all for nothing, then?"

"Not entirely. We have been rid of Voldemort for over six years and his followers have either been rounded up or gone to ground, present company excepted."

The man nodded. "Is Minerva here? I was hoping to have a word with her about one of her charges."

"She has taken a couple days off for personal business, Severus. I expect her back tomorrow evening."

"Personal business? What sort?"

"She did not tell me and I felt it would be prying to ask."

The man grunted. "The article mentions the girl again," he added in a whisper.

"It does, does it?"

Severus nodded. "In passing. But it suggests - strongly - that it may be more than a rumor, Headmaster. Is it?"

Dumbledore shrugged. "Either it is or it is not. Regardless, it is best left alone."

"But if she is..."

"Severus," Dumbledore said more strongly, "our world has suffered a tragedy. It should not be compounded with rumor, speculation and innuendo. If the girl exists, she is beyond our sight and perhaps it would be for the best under such circumstances to leave it that way."

"Yes, Headmaster."



"While your interest in that unfortunate family has intrigued me, Severus, I am forced to wonder if there is not some small part of you that had hoped to - er - torment that Potter lad."

"Sir?"

"I am not unaware of your disdain for his father - or his for you."

"I..."

"Although the point is now moot, you should not blame the boy for the sins of his father."

"Yes Headmaster."

---

Lucius Malfoy took most of his meals alone in his suite in the huge manor house. He had a wife and son, neither of whom he could stand. He had married to fulfill the need to sire an heir to his family name. It was an arranged marriage and, while his wife was attractive, she was weak in his mind. The boy was little better. He graced them with his presence only at dinner and then only as often as he could stomach them. He knew his son idolized him, but at age seven, the boy was useless.

Someday maybe, he thought, but he doubted the boy would ever amount to much - not that there was anything to amount to anymore. An heir, sure. The boy earned that at birth. But as one of Voldemort's most faithful and cunning followers? No. Lucius saw none of that in the boy. Not that it mattered. Voldemort was gone as was most hope for a world where he could lord over his lesser man without resorting to gold changing hands.

A servant brought him the morning paper and the headline stunned him for a moment. He carefully read the article and could see the Ministry's hands in the inevitable cover up. A gas fire, how original, he thought. Harry Potter was dead. In the end, that was all that mattered



to Lucius. As a mere baby, this freak of a child had destroyed the greatest wizard of all time, Lucius' Master known as Lord Voldemort.

Before that fateful night, Lucius stood at the cusp of his life long ambition. The Death Eaters were on the verge of winning the war and deposing the weak willed and corrupted magical government. A new age would dawn and Purebloods like Lucius would lord over lesser mortals. The Dark Lord, of course, would rule over all, but he would not be the face of the New Order. The public face would be the new Minister for Magic, one Lucius Malfoy. The lesser mortals would have to bow before him and pay their tributes to him and his Master.

That Half Breed filth, too low to be worthy of breathing the same air as Lucius, that foul baby of corrupt blood had almost ruined the Malfoy family. No one knew or understood how, but that impure, pathetic waste of magic had destroyed Voldemort completely. It had cost Lucius two-thirds of his vast fortune in bribes and payoffs since then to avoid the fate of many of his Death Eater associates. Lucius had avoided life without parole in Azkaban Prison. But even now he admitted to himself, he was still not the man he had once been. Too many favors called. Too many debts incurred. He had been the head of one of the most powerful Wizarding families in Britain. That was all lost.

Not that he was destitute. Far from it. But the honor and prestige that had been his as a child as the heir apparent was gone. Draco was not destined to inherit a powerful house as he had been. He wondered if deep down Draco knew that, which would explain why he seemed so useless.

His family's fall from prominence and respect to the social margins of aristocratic, pureblood society rested squarely on the head of that little filthy creature: Harry Potter. The boy had disappeared the very night he became the darling of the unwashed masses. No one knew where he was or even what he looked like. But Lucius was nothing if not patient. Sooner or later, the boy had to resurface, if only to go to school. When that happened, Lucius would be waiting. The boy would die for killing the Master and ruining the Malfoy patrimony!



Lucius had mixed feelings about the news that the antagonist was dead. On the one hand, he was elated. The boy had it coming and the Dark Lord had been avenged. On another, he was furious he had not had the honor of making the most glorious of kills. Finally, he seethed with jealousy at whichever of his former colleagues had taken that creature out once and for all!

He did not dwell on the news for long. He had plenty of other plots to attend to.

---

Gail Nelson was a little surprised to find herself back at the hospital. The Potter Case was closed once it was confirmed that the boy's abusive family had all died in a fire. She had been pleased to learn he had already been placed with a family and had spoken with Amanda Riggs, the Social Worker who recommended the placement. The Grangers sounded like a wonderful family. As she entered Amanda's office, she could not help but feel concerned that something had gone terribly wrong for that poor boy.

"Detective Sergeant Nelson," Amanda said. "So good of you to come."

"Gail, if you please. You say Detective Sergeant and I get this uncontrollable urge to salute or something."

Amanda chuckled. "Gail then. I'm Amanda. Have a seat."

Gail sat. "Is something wrong with the boy? His placement?"

"Oh no! Far from it. The family are the Grangers. The parents have a Dental practice not far from here although they live in Loughton, Essex. They have a daughter who is about Harry's age. She goes to St. Michaels, which is about two blocks from here. She's been with Harry everyday since he arrived. They seem to be kindred spirits."

"Bit young, don't you think?"



"You know what I mean. They've become best friends. And her parents seem to have taken a shine to him too. He seems happy."

"That's wonderful! So why am I here?"

Amanda slid a file across her desk to Gail. Gail picked it up instinctively and began reading through it. She stopped several times and her jaw dropped each time, but she kept reading trying to avoid jumping to any conclusions. Finally, she put the file down in disbelief. "You must be joking!"

"I'm with the government," Amanda said. "You know we may be incompetent, but we certainly have no sense of humor."

"Are you certain?"

"About as certain as you can get these days."

"How?"

"We're the government. Our first rule is if it can be messed up, we'll mess it up. Our second rule is if it cannot be messed up, read our first rule."

"What's her story?"

"She's adopted - or was. Lives here in London, or did. Her adoptive father passed away a little over a year ago from cancer. About a week ago, her adoptive mother was driving her to school when they were broadsided by a Lorry. It struck the driver's side killing the poor woman. She survived."

"No other family?"

"No. Although I think we both know what should be done in her case."

Gail nodded. "What?" she asked in feigned shock. "Are you suggesting we government types should do the right thing?"



"There's a first time for everything," Amanda laughed. "Every once in a while, I do like my job."

"I'm a sucker for happy endings as well."

---

The Grangers had left Hermione and Harry to go to lunch at a nearby restaurant. They really did not enjoy the hospital food. Neither did Harry or Hermione, but Harry could not leave and Hermione was willing to eat the stuff so long as it meant more time with Harry. Besides, both children agreed that a lunch without grownups was fun as they could talk about what they wanted to. They had just finished eating when there was a knock at the door.

Two women entered the room. Harry immediately recognized one as Nurse Gail. Nurse Gail was pushing a wheelchair in which sat a little girl with long black hair. She seemed very sad and afraid and did not seem to want to look at Harry or Hermione.

"Nurse Gail," Harry said brightly. "Hermione? This is Nurse Gail. You remember me telling you about her?"

"Yes," Hermione replied. "Pleasure to meet you. I am Hermione Granger. I'm Harry's friend and he's going to live with me and my parents."

"It's nice to meet you, Hermione," Gail said. "How are you doing, Harry?"

"Brilliant!"

"That's good to hear. I was worried about you, you know."

Harry blushed for a moment. "Erm - why aren't you in your Nurse togs?"



"Oh! Silly me. Must have forgot," Gail laughed. "While I am a Nurse, Harry, truth is I am also a Detective Sergeant in the Metro Police. I deal with cases like yours."

"Really?"

"Yup."

"You must be really smart to be both," Hermione commented.

"Or just hard working."

"So," Harry said, "is she..." he nodded towards the girl in the wheelchair?

"No Harry. She has a sad story too, but not like yours."

"He has a sad story?" the girl sniffed without looking.

"I do," Harry said. "My parents were killed by a bad guy when I was a baby. I was sent to live with my Mum's sister and her husband and their son. None of them liked me one bit. My Uncle hated me and hurt me all the time. A few weeks ago, he hurt me real bad. Hermione here and her parents found me and I woke up here. Nurse Gail here told me I would never have to live with my Aunt and Uncle again and Hermione told me I could live with her and her family and that's what's going to happen. I was miserable until I woke up here and found out that for the first time in my life I have a friend and there are people who like me."

"I don't have any friends," the girl said glumly. "Only Mummy and Daddy liked me. Th-they loved me! And they weren't even my real Mummy and Daddy. My real ones died when I was a baby. I was adopted. Daddy got really sick and went to a hospital and never woke up again. That was a year ago. On Tuesday, Mummy was driving me to school and there was a terrible crash and I woke up here. Mummy went to be with Daddy and she won't be back either! I have no family!" The poor girl was weeping silently.



"We'll see about that," Hermione said firmly. "I sure my Mum and Dad will let you come and live with us."

"How can you say that?"

"I'd listen to her," Harry said. "For one, people like the three of us should be together and for another, Hermione here is very persuasive."

"Why would you want me? I have no friends!"

"Before Harry," Hermione said, "neither did I. Like you, I am adopted and my Mummy and Daddy do love me too. But no friends. Harry had neither a Mum and Dad who loved him or friends. But Harry and I are friends, and we want you to be our friend and - I guess - sister."

"Yeah," Harry said.

For the first time, the girl looked up and Harry and Hermione could see her face. Both of them could not help but notice that she had brilliant green eyes, just like Harry. Through her tears, the girl forced a smile to appear.

"I am Clarice Jameson," she said.

"Harry Potter."

"Hermione Granger."

"We'll leave the three of you to get to know one another," the other woman said as the two women left.



## CHAPTER FIFTEEN: CLARICE

SATURDAY, MAY 28, 1988 - HOGWARTS SCHOOL OF WITCHCRAFT AND WIZARDRY, SCOTLAND, U.K.

"Ah, Minerva, come in," Dumbledore said seeing his Deputy Headmistress at his door. "I'm sorry to interrupt your 'personal business,' but there's something I need to discuss with you. You have a few minutes?"

"A few," Minerva said.

"How was your morning?"

"Enlightening," she said, doing her best to hide her emotions and memories.

"Glad to hear it."

"I have an appointment at two, Albus. I would like to keep it." The subtle meaning was "get to the point." Dumbledore was never a direct person.

"Have you seen today's Daily Prophet?" Dumbledore asked.

"No."

He handed her a copy and she saw the headline, doing her best not to smirk. "I am aware you made a statement, Albus. Potter is dead. So?"

"I've highlighted a paragraph towards the end you should read."

McGonagall found the paragraph and read:

And of course none of these events or facts helps answer the other unanswered question from that night so many years ago: did Harry Potter have a younger sister? Rumors have circulated that Lily Potter gave birth to a daughter, Clarice only weeks, if not days before that tragic night. Of course, no infant body was ever found at the Potter's



hide-a-way and, as the building was left in ruins, there was no evidence of one, but the rumors persist to this day. Given the clear cover-up regarding the location of the Boy-Who-Lived, one must assume that where there is smoke, surely there is a fire!

“So,” McGonagall said. “This rumor has existed since that terrible day.”

“It exists because one whom I trust with many things has a big mouth,” Dumbledore said.

“Hagrid?”

“Who else? He never brags or anything like that, you know. He just has a bad habit of being too open.”

“Particularly in the pubs,” McGonagall nodded. “So this is true?”

“Clarice Lillian Potter was born July 12th, 1981. She was uninjured in the attack. You questioned me that night why I let Hagrid bring Harry to Surrey? Yes, I do trust him with my life - and Harry’s. But I knew someone betrayed James and Lily and was certain it was Black. Black was there when I arrived, you know. He had just found the boy when the girl began to cry. I was certain he would have finished the job had I not arrived. I was surprised how he simply gave Harry up when I asked him to and asked him to see to the girl. Then again, he was her Godfather too.

“He was dating a Muggle who worked for the Muggle Government in some kind of work involving placing orphans with families. So I asked him to have Clarice placed out. He went his way, Hagrid and I went ours.

“I admit I have given the girl little thought over the years. But now with Harry dead, I find I must. She is the last survivor of the Potter line and caretaker of the legacy. We need to find out what became of her and if she is still alive, we need to keep her safe.”

With the morning’s discussions fresh in her mind, McGonagall knew this was not about the Potter estate, their wealth or bloodline. This



was about the Magical Heir. It seemed Dumbledore knew that Harry was an Heir of at least one for the Founders. Were Harry truly dead, this Clarice would be the blood link to the line until she had a male descendent.

"You're much better at working the Muggle side of things than I am, Minerva," Dumbledore said. "True, there are others who are better, but I would prefer no involvement from the Ministry - even those who are loyal to me."

"I understand. And my duties here?"

"This is not immediately critical. Consider it a spare time and summer project for now."

She nodded.

"Oh, lest I forget. Severus would like to see you at your earliest conveniences about a member of your house."

"Let me guess," Minerva said. "Some of his Slytherin thugs got their asses kicked by one Charlie Weasley?"

"Severus did not enlighten me on the details, Minerva. But I would say that's a fair bet."

"Probably served them right."

"Arguably. Now, I'm sure you wish to get back to - well whatever."

"Thank you, Albus," she said before turning to leave the office.

SATURDAY, MAY 28, 1988 - ST. BARTHOLOMEW'S CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL, LONDON, U.K.

"How are you doing, Clarice?" Hermione asked after a long silence.

"I'm so scared," she whimpered.

"I know what you mean," Harry said. "I was scared too."



"You were?"

Harry nodded. "Last thing I remembered, I was almost hit by a car while crossing the street. Then, it's about a week later and I'm here in this room. I hurt all over. I had no idea where I was and I don't know anyone. Then, I'm told I'm never going back to my Aunt and Uncles again 'cause they are bad people, but they did not tell me where I was going. I was so alone."

"Me too - not that way, but yeah. What's going to happen to me?"

Harry chuckled. "Well, if Hermione has her way, you're going to live with us."

"Why would you want me? Everybody I know dies!"

"I know what you mean," Harry said. "My real parents are dead, and I learned a few days ago my Aunt, Uncle and Cousin died in a fire. But that's just bad luck."

"You're not going to like me," Clarice moped.

"Why not?" Hermione asked.

"Nobody does - at least no one my age. They don't understand me and you won't either."

"Try us."

"Most kids live with their real parents - or at least a parent."

"I don't remember my real parents," Harry said. "I was fifteen months old when they were killed. They died trying to save my life from a madman."

"His followers killed my real parents a couple of weeks earlier," Hermione said, "I'm told it was just after my second birthday. They gave me up for adoption not because they didn't want me or love me, but because they were too young to take care of me. They still



wanted to be a part of my life. I don't even know what they looked like."

"I don't even know if I have any other relatives," Clarice said.

"I am the only person left in my entire family," Harry said, "so far as I know."

"My Great-grandmother is still alive," Hermione said. "She had three children, eight grandchildren and six great-grandchildren. I'm the only one left."

"Okay, we've got that in common," Clarice said. "Alright! I don't like playing with dolls."

"Neither do I," Harry chuckled.

"You better not," Hermione said. "And you won't be able to at my house. I collect them, but don't play with them."

"You collect dolls?"

"Fancy ones from all over the world - or at least they are dressed that way. Places I want to visit someday."

"What do you do for fun Clarice?" Harry asked.

"READ!"

"Makes three of us," Hermione said. "Harry and I read a lot too."

"What's your favorite book?" Harry asked.

"Watership Down," Clarice said. "It's a children's book, but all with words. My Mum said it was a critique of the problems of the world using rabbits instead of people. I thought it was pretty smart and fun to read. I also like The Secret Garden."

"I should probably read it," Harry said. "Right now, I'm reading the Lord of the Rings."



"I've read that one," Hermione said. "I'm reading the Chronicles of Narnia now. Harry's already read those books."

"I'm the smartest in my class," Clarice added. "My teachers want me to skip second year entirely. Most kids hate me for it."

"I'm gonna skip third year," Harry said. "I'm also at the top of my class, 'cept no one knows that other than my teacher."

"I started a year early," Hermione said. "Kids don't like me 'cause I always make them look silly."

"You're still going to hate me," Clarice said. "You're going to think I'm a nutter." She then leaned in intently and whispered: "I can do magic!"

"Card tricks?" Harry asked.

"No! Real magic! Stuff I can't explain. If I want something to happen bad enough, it does!"

"I once grew my hair back overnight when my Aunt tried to have my head shaved," Harry said. "Another time, I was being chased by bullies and all of a sudden I was on the roof of my school - four stories up!"

"Some bullies were beating me," Hermione said. "So I wanted them to go away so I just burst into flames. Didn't hurt me at all, but two of them went to the hospital. You mean stuff like that?"

Clarice's jaw dropped open and her eyes widened significantly. "I thought I was the only one! I thought I was special! I thought I was a freak!" The last word made Harry wince.

"You are not the only one," Hermione said. "But you are special in your own way."

"What are you two?"

"I'm a witch just like you. Harry's a wizard."



"They're real?"

"Yup," Harry said. "We're learning about them."

"Can I - can I learn too?"

"Only if you want to be our friend," Harry said.

"I'd - thank you. I'd like that very much."

---

Minerva McGonagall returned to the hospital room where Harry was staying a few minutes before two o'clock. It seemed she had walked in onto some kind of conference. Harry, Hermione and the Grangers were there, but there were also three other people: two women and a young girl in a wheelchair. One of the women was talking.

"No, she does not and will not need the wheelchair. She can walk, it's just hospital policy."

"That's good," Rose said. She then noticed Minerva in the door. "Minne! Come in!"

Minerva walked in and approached the group. "Everyone, this is Minnie," Rose said. "She's Hermione's Great-Grandmother and teaches at a boarding school up north. She came to London to meet Harry."

"Good afternoon," Minerva said.

"Minnie, this is Amanda Riggs," Rose said indicating the older of the two women. "She's a social worker here at the hospital and was responsible for placing Harry with us. And this is Detective Sergeant Gail Nelson from the Metro Police. She worked with Harry on his case." Pleasantries were exchanged.

"Has something come up regarding Harry?" Minerva asked.



"No, Minnie," Robert said. "Not regarding Harry. Minnie, these women have asked us to consider taking on another foster child as well." Rose turned the wheelchair towards Minerva and she saw the young girl.

Minerva saw that the girl had the same eyes as Harry. It couldn't be, she thought.

"Minnie, this is Clarice Jameson," Robert said. "She was an orphan as a very young baby and was adopted. Her adoptive father died of cancer a little over a year ago. She lost her Mum in a car crash a few days ago."

"I'm so sorry," Minerva said softly.

"It turns out she has an older brother..."

"I do?" Clarice asked in shock.

"Yes, Clarice, you do," Amanda said.

"Don't tell me," Minerva said almost in shock, "Harry?"

Robert nodded.

"Me?" Harry asked in shock.

"I have a b-b-brother?" Clarice asked as she began to cry.

"Should have known," Hermione grumbled. "They have the same eyes!"

"I'm not alone!" Clarice sobbed.

Hermione noted that Harry was acting as if something was in his eye.

Mr. Granger picked up the crying girl and held her in his arms as she cried into his shoulder. She had not cried following the accident, not really. She had been too confused and too afraid to finally let go of



her emotions. Now, the grief she felt of having lost the life she had known and the joy she felt at finding a life she never knew could exist for her intermingled and she could do nothing but cry. It was several minutes before she began to calm down.

When she was reduced to sniffing, Robert Granger spoke to her softly, but loud enough for everyone to hear. "Clarice? These women here want us to be your family, but we can't make you join us. Do you want to live with your brother Harry and Hermione and of course me and my wife Rosie?"

Clarice could not speak just yet. She simply sniffled again and nodded into her now new father's chest.

"How 'bout you lot," he added looking at his daughter and Harry.

"I'm her brother," Harry said. "Of course."

"Yes, Daddy," Hermione said.

"It'll be a big change, Hermione," Rose Granger said. "You've been the only child in the house for ages.

"I think I can manage, Mother!"

"And, only one of you can have a room to yourself."

"That's okay," Hermione said with a bit of a smirk that only Harry caught. "Clarice can have her own room. I'll room with Harry."

"What?" her father coughed.

"Got you!" Hermione laughed. "Of course I'll share my room with my little sister!"

"Sister," Clarice whispered as a hint of a smile crossed her lips.

With that, Amanda and Gail smiled and took their leave to begin the paperwork.



"Alright," Harry said somewhat seriously, "who knew what when? Why didn't anyone tell me I had a sister? A real sister?"

"Sorry Harry," Hermione said. "I suspected something like that but - well I thought it was a - er - coincidence."

"What?" both Harry and Clarice asked.

"Your eyes," Hermione said. "They are identical and - well - a bit unusual. Throw in the same hair and..."

"Hold it!" Harry said, "Clarice and I might share the same color hair, but hers isn't all over the place!"

"I'm just saying, Harry. There were clues."

"We were told when we got back from lunch," Rose Granger said. "Amanda and Gail, those two women? Well, you and Clarice are on record with Social Services. Both of your files have your Birth Certificates. Harry was born to James and Lily Potter in the Village of Godrics Hollow on July 31st, 1980. Clarice was born to James and Lily Potter on July 12th, 1981 in the same village in Devon. They didn't know why you two were separated and wound up in separate homes. Amanda says it's not department policy to separate siblings except in extreme circumstances, but mistakes have been made before and since, so..."

"If you could call living with my - our Aunt and Uncle a home," Harry muttered loudly. "Somehow, I sense this Dumbledore's hand in this. Clarice had a loving family, and I was beaten!" Harry then glared at McGonagall. "Did you know about this?"

"Not until earlier today, no," she said. "I left earlier because Dumbledore summoned me. The story hit the papers this morning that Harry Potter, The-Boy-Who-Lived, the baby who won the war was dead. But, it mentioned your sister by name. Clarice has been nothing more than a rumor in our world. Dumbledore told me today she was real and asked me to find her to see if she was still safe."

"He didn't even know where she was?"



“No.”

“Why were we separated?” Clarice asked.

“It’s a long story,” McGonagall said.

“Hermione and I will tell her what we know,” Harry said. “Why were we separated?”

“Dumbledore did not tell me everything today,” McGonagall said. “You were sent to your Aunt’s because of the blood protection she could provide.”

“Don’t you think I would have had it with Clarice? That blood protection was based upon my Aunt being my mother’s sister. Clarice is her daughter! The wards that protected me would have worked with her, wouldn’t they?”

“I can only assume that they would, Harry. But it was you who was in the gravest peril. Many people knew about you on both sides and it was you that You-Know-Who was trying to kill. Even though he was defeated, he still had followers who would have jumped at the opportunity to finish the job. Clarice was unknown. As I understand it, until today there were only three people alive in our world who knew she existed: Dumbledore; Rubeus Hagrid, who brought you from the ruins of your parent’s home to the Dursleys and your godfather Sirius Black, who was Clarice’s as well. He took her elsewhere. Dumbledore said he was dating an Muggle who worked for social services. Of course, Black’s in prison, so...

“Anyway, Clarice was not in as grave danger at the time and my guess is Dumbledore wanted to keep it that way just in case.”

“Of what?”

“If something had happened to you, Harry, Clarice becomes the last of your magical line. She’s not the heir as you know. But if you were dead and she were to have a son, he would be. Dumbledore wanted to preserve the line at the very least.”



“So I have to go away?” Clarice whimpered.

“If Dumbledore finds out,” McGonagall said. “If he does, it won’t be from me.”

“Why?”

“Because Hermione is my family and I cannot go against my family. As you are part of her family, you’ve become part of mine. Dumbledore assumes that I have no family because he knows nothing of Hermione. If he knew, he would have sent someone else to check on Clarice.”

“And what will you tell him?” Rose Granger asked.

“That I am looking. She’ll be found when she comes to Hogwarts.”

“And he’ll know you’ve lied to him.”

“No. That I doubt.”

“Why?”

“Remember, he doesn’t know about Hermione or you for that matter. He believes Harry is dead and won’t learn the truth for three years. When he does, he may find out about Clarice, but not from me. By then it’ll be too late.”

“Why’s that?” Hermione asked.

“Because, unless I am mistaken, the wards that protected Harry when he lived with his Aunt will re-establish themselves now that Harry will be living with another blood relation - Clarice.”

“What are wards?” Clarice began to ask when suddenly her eyes grew large and her mouth dropped open. “Whoa!” she exclaimed.

“What?”



"Th-that man," she said pointing, "he just - er - materialized out of thin air! Just like the transporters on Star Trek!"

The others turned when they heard a laugh.

"Good afternoon, Sensei," Hermione and Harry said, subtly letting Clarice know that Sensei was normal, for lack of a better word.

"You two know him?" Clarice asked.

"Of course," Harry said. "In some ways, he's the reason I am here and therefore, the reason I met Hermione, her parents, her great-grandmum and now you. He's my magical teacher and Hermione's and - if you want - yours as well."

Sensei then explained to Clarice what he was.

"So, you're like a hologram, just like on the holodeck of the Enterprise?" she asked.

"A good analogy," Sensei replied. "I am not truly a hologram. A hologram is made from coherent light, I am made from coherent magical energy, but the concept is similar."

"You like Start Trek?" Hermione asked. "Which one? Original?"

"Both," Clarice replied.

"What's Star Trek?" Harry asked.

"It's a show on the Telly," Clarice said. "It's so cool!"

"It's on tonight, Harry," Hermione added. "Next Generation, that is. We can watch it if you like."

"That'd be brilliant," Harry said. "I've never really watched the telly before."

"You haven't?" Clarice asked.



"His Aunt and Uncle were not very nice to him," Hermione said.

"Sensei?" Harry asked. "Did you know Clarice in your timeline? Did you know she was your sister?"

Sensei had a sad look on his face as he shook his head. "I knew of her," he confessed, "but never knew her.

"Clarice Jameson was a year or so behind me at Hogwarts and in another House - Ravenclaw as I recall. We never had any classes together and she was not a member in any of the organizations I belonged to. She also was certainly not part of the Harry Potter Fan Club."

"The what?" Harry gasped.

"It was not a real club," Sensei said, "at least not that I know of. It's what we called the silly girls who - er - wanted me to marry them, I suppose."

Harry looked mortified which drew giggles from the two girls.

"In the summer of 1997," Sensei went on, "the war went from bad to worse. The enemy - Voldemort and his followers - overthrew the government. One of the enemy's sympathizers pushed through a law that called for the rounding up of all Muggleborns - witches and wizards who had no known magical families. Thousands were caught, men, women and children and sent to the wizard prison of Azkaban. Thousands more fled the country altogether. One in five who was sent to Azkaban died there.

"The war ended less than a year later and I was now an Auror - a wizard policeman. I was part of the team that prepared the case against those involved in the Muggleborn Registration. Over five hundred innocent people had died as a result of that pointless law. Among those who died was Clarice Jameson."

"I'm going to die?" Clarice whimpered.

"I don't know."



"But you said I did!"

"In my timeline, yes. But your timeline is already very different. You never met me in my timeline. You never learned I was your brother and you and I never lived together as a family after our real parents died. You see? All that's different now. You met Harry today and learned he is your brother and that you will live together as a family. Harry will see to it that you don't meet that same fate."

"You bet," Harry said.

"As Minerva said, for a long time there were only three people alive who even knew I had a sister for certain, much less who she was. Hagrid was loyal to Dumbledore even after Dumbledore died. I'm sure Dumbledore told him not to tell me about Clarice. Hagrid was a close friend, but never told me. For most of my childhood, our Godfather was in prison for a crime he did not commit. I only saw him as a free man - although a fugitive as he escaped - for two years before he was killed in a battle with the enemy. He never told me. Of course, Dumbledore never told me either. I was sixteen when Dumbledore died. The secret of Clarice was one he tried to take with him to his grave.

"It was not until I was twenty-one and getting married that I finally got around to checking on my various inheritances. It was when I was doing that that I saw our parents' wills. Clarice was to inherit half of everything - even with half, she would have been quite wealthy. But she had been dead for four years by then. Until today, there was a part of me that always wondered what my life would have been like if I had known about Clarice and she about me and we truly were brother and sister. Now, I guess, I will be able to find out.

"The war ended and I knew nothing of a sister. I was a part of what people called 'The Golden Trio.' Three of us had fought side by side in many battles and in the end we defeated Voldemort and ended that war. The three of us had been best friends since early in our first year at Hogwarts. In addition to me, there was my Hermione and a boy named Ron Weasley. In our first year at school, we fought a troll and



defeated Voldemort's first attempt to come back. We had lots of adventures together growing up.

"But we did grow up and Ron and I became interested in girls and Hermione in boys. Ron and I both fell in love with Hermione. I dared not believe she could ever feel the same way about me as I did about her. Ron would marry her even though it turned out she was in love with me, but like me did not believe I could feel that way about her. Despite the fame and wealth, we were miserable.

"Perhaps your lives will be quite different. In fact, I am almost sure of it. The love problems that ultimately ruined our lives might not affect you three."

"Why do you say that?" Hermione asked.

"This time around there may be a new 'Golden Trio:' a brother, a sister and their best friend. The confusion that destroyed my life will not be there for Harry here - or the others."

"Sensei?" Hermione asked. "I have a question."

"Shoot." Sensei replied.

"Um - well you've told us only Harry can see you and only those others he trusts completely. I mean, I could see you almost immediately, I think, same with Mum and Dad. Minnie took a little longer, but not much. And now Clarice? Are you sure it's about trust?"

"Good question," Sensei said. "The magic used to make me is not well studied. Fact is, I am truly one of a kind. But I think I have an answer, Hermione. You are the reason most the others can see me."

"Me?"

"Harry has trusted you from the start. The 'trust' component of my magical algorithm might extend to those you trust implicitly. And I know you trust your parents and Minerva."

"And Clarice?"



"The fact she can see me after you barely met and before you became close friends tells me she's really his sister."

"How?"

"I would appear to Harry's parents, godparents, and siblings even if he did not know them. It's arguably a flaw in my matrix, but as I did not know I'd run into my sister and my parents are dead and I did trust my godfather, I considered that flaw as being of little consequence."

"I thought maybe Harry trusted a little easy."

"Hey," Harry said. "I'm right here."

"Sorry Harry," Hermione said sheepishly.

"It's okay."

"There may be some of that as well, but I can't tell yet," Sensei said. "I can assure you, I am keeping an eye out. I trusted too easily in my youth and am concerned. But no worries yet. I can say from my own past that you are the first person Harry has ever trusted. You are his first and best friend and that probably will not change. Naturally, those you trust earn Harry's trust."

"Sensei?" Harry asked.

"Yes Harry?"

"Were you going to tell me about Clarice?"

"I was planning to, Harry. Not today, of course, but I was. I surely did not expect her to drop out of the blue, as it were. And you must understand, I knew little about her except her name, that she attended Hogwarts and died in the camps in my timeline. That's it. But yes, Harry. She is your sister and you would have been told probably later this summer after you get out of here and when you could have had help in finding her."



"Oh. Okay. Could we have found her otherwise?"

"I don't know, Harry. I like to think so, but I don't know."

"So it's just luck we found each other?"

"That would be a fair assessment, Harry. While you could not rely on luck, it is something that happens."

A/N: How was Clarice adopted? She was dropped off with Muggle Social Services the night of the attack. They had her papers and, of course waited and sent notice hoping family would take her in. Nothing happened. With her parents confirmed dead, she became Ward of the Court and eligible for adoption or placement. Being a newborn, she would have gone quickly once it was confirmed there was no family to take her in. (I can imagine Dumbles had something to do with that.)

As for how do we know she's his brother? In 1988 DNA test were not a matter of routine. (It was still new and just beginning to gain some acceptance as competent evidence.) The birth certificates would have been sufficient evidence absent a challenge.



## CHAPTER SIXTEEN: MISTAKES AND PURPOSE

SATURDAY, MAY 28, 1988 - ST. BARTHOLOMEW'S CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL, LONDON, U.K.

"Now," Sensei said, "when I chose to arrive, I believe there were two topics of conversation? You were discussing theories as to why Harry and Clarice were separated and the subject of wards, correct?"

"Yes," Hermione said.

"I believe the two topics are related."

"What are wards?" Clarice asked again.

"Ah! Once again a good question! It's a pity in my timeline most all of my students lacked the intellectual curiosity to ask the important questions! For the three of you, learn this: the only stupid questions are the ones you should have asked but didn't.

"The word 'ward' has several meanings in the English language. It's oldest meaning was to protect or to guard. That is what a magical ward does. It is magic that is designed to protect or guard something. It typically is created through the use of a type of spell known as a charm, but it can also be created by a potion or by the use of specially crafted ritual runes.

"There are many different kinds of wards in everyday use in the magical world. The most common is the 'Muggle Repelling Charm.' It's name is inaccurate. The charm hides a magical place from non-magical people. They are not so much as repelled as deceived. A huge magical building will appear as a ruin or uninviting place. My particular favorite effect is where the building would appear to be a festering toxic waste dump complete with stink. That is the final effect. More often, the non-magical person suddenly loses interest and remembers they have more important things to attend to.

"There are wards that prevent magical transportation either to or from a protected place. There are wards that prevent magical people from finding a location or detecting its occupants unless they have



permission to find the place. Then there are the cursed wards that cause serious harm to those who are not allowed to be at the location. Warding possibilities are almost endless, but there are few wards that can make a place invulnerable against any threat. In most cases, several different wards are employed.

“But there was a ward that could do that and more. It protected a place against any and all magic. It would cause the death of anyone who tried to force their way in or to break the ward. It also protected the people under the ward such that they could venture forth from time to time and fear no attack. It’s called the Blood Ward although since no blood ritual is involved in its creation, this is inaccurate. Its proper name would be the Family Ward. It has been illegal for some time.”

“Why is it illegal?” Hermione asked.

“Two reasons,” Sensei replied. “First off, unlike almost all other ward magic, the magic in a blood ward is cast upon a person, a child in fact. Casting magic upon a person is not considered proper, and on a child? That’s right out! All legal wards are cast upon property, not a living being and not a child. The magic in the blood ward is based upon the love of a mother for their child. Once cast, that love provides protection for that child and its family until such child comes of age at seventeen. But the idea of using a child as a magical source is not considered proper.

“The other reason is the effect of the spell if it works. It provides near total magical protection to the family. So long as the child is under the age of seventeen - the age of majority in our world - no magical attack or threat can harm that child or the family. While their home is the base of the wards, the wards protect the family regardless, provided they consider the home their home and domicile. The ward prevents magical detection as well - which is why it’s illegal. The child and any other children can do magic! In Britain, it is illegal for a child to do anything other than accidental magic outside of a Ministry of Magic approved school.

“Only those who are trusted by the family can enter the wards and, if they try to enter to betray that trust, they will fail. Had such a ward



been in place when you were born, Harry, your family would still be alive and together. Dumbledore could have created that ward on your birth, but he is always concerned about legalities, at least until they bite back. He created the ward after your parents were killed and, I believe, separated you and Clarice for a reason."

"And that was?" Harry asked.

"The ward is at full strength when the warded child lives with a blood relative and they bond as family. Clarice and you, being so close in age, would have bonded as siblings. Dumbledore wanted and needed to monitor you, Harry. He would not have been able to do that unless he sent you to live with a blood relative who despised you or who you were. And it had to be without your sister. As you are with your sister now, the bond is reforming and once you leave here and move in with the Grangers, it will seal! You, Clarice, the Grangers, Minnie and Hermione will be safe from uninvited magical threat until the youngest of you turns seventeen! You can walk down Diagon Alley - the wizarding mall, for lack of a more apt expression - walk right up to the worst of your enemy's and so long as you seek no fight, even if they know you, they will not know you unless you reveal yourselves to them! Voldemort himself would not know you! That's one of the reasons the Ward Dumbledore used is illegal. The other? Unless you trusted a member of the Hogwarts staff - Minnie to be certain - you would never get the invitation to attend!

"So far as the magical world is concerned, if the ward forms between you and Clarice - and I think it will - you all will not exist! Oh, you will, but the magical world will forget about you and only those you tell will know who you really are - and they cannot spread that around. To be honest, they could scream it from the roof tops of Diagon Alley and everyone would merely think they're barmy. Consequently, Dumbledore cannot mold your fate to meet his vision of the future if a full fledged Family Ward is in place, even when you attend Hogwarts. His plans will be over soon."

"Meaning my being a Martyr," Harry said.

Sensei nodded. "Exactly! Handing you over to a blood relative who hated magic and would not protect you opened holes in the Wards



that allowed you to be magically monitored. Not huge holes that would allow an enemy a means to attack you, but you would be monitored, Harry. As Dumbledore foolishly believed his plan foolproof, when the wards collapsed as a result of the end of you - er - Dursley family connection, he could not help but conclude you are dead. His warding ideas were a big mistake, but by no means his biggest."

"And what was the biggest?" Harry asked. "Does it involve me?"

"Only indirectly mostly, Harry," Sensei replied. "You remember how I told you about the night your parents died and why they were murdered?"

Harry nodded.

"There is a curse out there known as the Killing Curse. Even non-magical people have heard of it. Its real incantation sounds like 'Abra Kadabra.' This was the curse Voldemort used on your parents and tried to use on you. It destroys all magic in a living thing or object and if your magic is destroyed, you die - instantly. There's no known way to protect against it. Your only defenses are to either block it with a steel plate or rock or to dodge it.

"Voldemort killed your parents, your mother right before your eyes. He then tried to kill you and...failed. The attempt destroyed his physical being."

"So he's dead then?" Robert asked.

"Physically, yes. He has no physical being or body anymore. My appearance is even more substantial than he is now. But his soul remains anchored to this world and as long as it so remains, he can come back one day and find or create a new body for himself."

Minerva gasped! "He has a Horcrux?"

"What's that?" Clarice asked.

"Yes, Minerva," Sensei said, "and he has more than one. As for your question Clarice, the simplest explanation is it is an evil magical



object that a wizard creates to anchor his soul to this world so that he cannot truly die. He accomplishes this by tearing a bit of his soul off and storing it in the object. Now you cannot just tear your soul at will. No! You must do something so evil, so heinous so as to render your soul breakable and unstable. The most common thing is to murder someone in cold blood. Raping a child, particularly a family member is also said to work, although there are no documented cases of that."

"So he's a murderer?" Rose asked.

"Arguably an understatement," Sensei replied. "Most murderers are decent people when compared to him.

"Anyway, so long as his Horcrux survives intact, the rest of his soul is anchored to this world. With help, either through possession of another or by some other means, he can perform any of six rituals or magical rites that will restore him to a body."

"So he needs this horcrux for the ritual?" Harry asked.

"Yes and no," Sensei said. "It needs to exist intact with its soul fragment safe inside. But he does not need to have it in the physical or geographic sense. He could be on the opposite side of the world and be able to return to a physical form."

"Sounds horrible," Rose commented.

"Indeed, it is. What's worse is that he made more than one - no one had ever done that before and until each and every one of them is destroyed, he can come back and cannot truly be killed."

"And he must be killed?" McGonagall asked.

"He has so severed his immortal soul that he is not human anymore. There can be no redemption or hope for him. Thousands have died because of him and, until he is stopped forever, billions are at risk. Harry, Hermione and Clarice are orphans from their birthparents because of him. Voldemort must die for good and forever!"

"And destroying these horcrux things," Robert Granger began.



"Will make him mortal again," Sensei concluded. "As a mortal, he can be killed once and for all and we can hope to avoid the nuclear holocaust his continued existence caused in my timeline. As a mortal, anyone can kill him."

"So I don't have to?" Harry asked.

"The math says only you can defeat his defenses, Harry," Sensei said. "But once his defenses are gone, once he is mortal, if he's not paying attention crossing the road, a London bus could be his end. He could choke to death on a chicken bone or - as he is older, a heart attack could do him in. Wouldn't rule that out, by the way. The git thinks he's invincible so I doubt he's been eating right. While we magicals can live a long, long time, we are not immune from certain physical flaws and can die young of natural causes. And I doubt the git would visit a Healer."

"Does Dumbledore know about these horcruxes?" McGonagall asked.

"Right now?" Sensei replied, "he suspects but lacks proof. He knows Voldemort was not really killed - there would have been remains. He knows Voldemort bragged to his followers about defeating death - a euphemism in magical talk for having at least one. But for now he has no solid proof and will not have any until June of 1993, if nothing happens before then."

"So, what are these horcrux things," Harry asked, "where are they? Can we get to them and how do we destroy them?"

"In my timeline," Sensei said, "the first Horcrux came to light - as I said - in June 1993. It was a diary that belonged to one Tom Riddle, the boy who would one day become Voldemort. I destroyed it when I was twelve. Right now, I have no idea where it is, but I do know at least one former Death Eater - a soldier for Voldemort - either has it or knows where it is.

"The second Horcrux destroyed was a ring that belonged to Riddle's maternal grandfather, the legal heir of Salazar Slytherin. It is in the dead man's ruin of a home, buried beneath the dirt floor and



protected by powerful curses that, in my timeline, led to Dumbledore's death in June of 1997 because he failed to break one of them. Should you attend the Watanabe School, Harry, you will succeed where he failed but until then I will say no more.

"The third was a locket that again belonged to the magical side of Riddle's family. His father was non-magical and only got together with his mother by her use of a love potion. She pawned the locket for meal money after the potion wore off and she was penniless and pregnant on the streets of London. It was also well guarded. But a boy who joined Voldemort's army betrayed him - at the cost of his life - and stole it from its well guarded hiding place. It now sits on a bookcase in that boy's now abandoned ancestral home. A home that now belongs to Harry's godfather, who sits in prison for a crime he did not commit. I should hope, Minerva, you take the time to catch the rat who can set the man free?"

Minerva nodded.

"The fourth was a goblet of gold that had once belonged to Helga Hufflepuff, one of the founders of Hogwarts. It sits in a high security vault in Gringotts - the magical world's bank. The Vault owners are all convicted Death Eaters rotting away in prison. For now, there is no way to get to that one. In time, there may be.

"The fifth is a historical object long thought to be lost to the world. It was a tiara - also known as a diadem - that belonged to another Hogwarts founder: Rowena Ravenclaw. Arguably, it's one of Hermione's family heirlooms, but it must be destroyed! It sits in a secret room at Hogwarts.

"The sixth, well in my timeline this was Dumbledore's biggest mistake. Mine as well because I had absolute faith in the man. Dumbledore believed it was this snake that Voldemort kept. The snake was nothing more than a familiar. When it was destroyed I foolishly thought it was over for the bastard. I killed his body minutes later. But twenty-five years later, he returned, so obviously I missed something - as did Dumbledore. The real horcrux was a small shield that belonged to Godric Gryffindor - Harry's ancestor. It is also in a secret room in Hogwarts.



"The final horcrux is in many ways the most problematic. Voldemort created it by accident when he tried to kill Harry all those years ago. It's Harry."

"Me?" Harry gasped.

"The scar on your forehead, to be precise," Sensei said.

"How do we get rid of it?" Hermione asked.

"The easy way is to kill Harry," Sensei said. The gasps of horror did not stop the old man. "I SAID THE EASY WAY! That was the way Dumbledore envisioned in my timeline and that was what happened. I was killed, but my soul did not move on as I was given the choice to come back and finish it. I chose to do so, but I did not have to and could have stayed dead. There are two other ways I know of.

"First, Harry can fall in love and conceive a child. But it must be true and undying love - as opposed to lust or a fling - and it must occur before Harry turns seventeen. It must be mutual, both the love and, more importantly the desire to have the child. The child had to be wanted from the moment of the act by both and not an accident. Possible, but not practical in reality as true love cannot be predicted and - well the girl or her family might object."

"You're talking about Hermione, aren't you?" Robert Granger said.

"Not with any degree of certainty," Sensei said. "But I would say that in my timeline, she was the most likely one. The drawbacks are obvious. Hermione would give birth to the child at no later than age eighteen - probably sooner. But, the one advantage is simple. Love is the opposite of hate and hate is needed to create a horcrux. The horcruxes are interconnected to some extent. Should one be destroyed by love, all remaining horcruxes, wherever they are, would be destroyed at the same time. If Voldemort is not in a physical body at that time, he dies. If my timeline is still in effect, to achieve that result - and assuming Hermione is the love of Harry's life - she would have to conceive much earlier. If she carried to term, the child would



be born not later than February of 1996. She would be sixteen, Harry fifteen at the time of birth.”

“So,” Robert Granger said, “our options are to kill Harry or for my daughter to have a child within the next eight years? Unacceptable!”

“Those are two options,” Sensei said. “There is a third. I admit I don’t understand it completely, but it does not require killing or babies.”

“And what is that?”

“The Watanabe School I mentioned earlier. There are teachers there from all over - students as well. The faculty knows magic we don’t know here. They are not bound by our magical laws - which are considered overly restrictive in most of the world. In the magical world, Britain is a backward country lacking any progressive thought. There is magic they can do that we refused to learn because it is foreign and must be Dark. It may not be pleasant, but I have reason to believe if Harry is sent there, the horcrux within him will be found and destroyed, without the less desirable results I have discussed. But, that is your decision to make. For Harry, the best decision in my opinion, as well as for Hermione and Clarice as well. They could learn far more there than here. Think about it?”

“Anything seems better but what about the cost?”

“We’ll discuss finances tomorrow. Think about it?”

“If feasible, if it works, Robert?” Rose Granger began.

“We’ll discuss this,” he nodded. “It is preferable to the other options. Leave those for the ‘no other choice’ category.”

“How do we destroy the others?” Harry asked.

“There are ways,” Sensei said. “Ways Dumbledore refused to teach me because he considered it Dark Magic. In almost all cases, it’s not the magic that is Dark but the user. Aside from the ritual that I believe the Japanese know, and the option of Harry becoming a Dad before he’s old enough to drive, there are three known ways to destroy a



Horcrux. One is the Killing Curse I mentioned earlier. It destroys magic and would thus destroy the magical protections that hold the soul in the object. Without that protection, the soul fragment ceases to be. Dumbledore considers anyone who would even deign to learn that spell Dark per se. He forgets that most Curse Breakers know it and use it in their work.

“Another is a fire spell called Feindfyre. It’s considered Dark because it is impossible to control. It too destroys magic. Yet again, it does have uses. Magical metal smiths use it all the time to stoke their forges. Even if you could be taught these spells, you are years away from being ready.

“The easiest way to destroy a horcrux is with basilisk venom. It too destroys magic, unfortunately it’s not something one can pop down to the local market and pick up. If there is any out there for sale, it is probably next to impossible to find and would cost a king’s ransom.”

“What’s a basilisk,” Clarice asked.

“It’s a magical hybrid of sorts. It’s a great, ruddy snake that can only be bred in captivity and only by a really powerful witch or wizard. It lives practically forever unless it is killed and that’s no picnic. A fully grown one can be over sixty feet in length and weigh as much as an elephant. Its venom is only one of its weapons. Its stare is lethal. If you make eye contact with one, you drop dead - provided you are close enough.”

“How did you destroy the horcruxes in your timeline, Sensei?” Hermione asked.

“Basilisk venom,” Sensei said.

“But you said that’s really hard to get!”

“Unless you are lucky enough to find a basilisk - or unlucky. I killed one when I was twelve. Dumb luck, really. Put a sword through its skull, but had I known then what I know now, there is an easier and less potentially life ending way.”



“What’s that?”

“A rooster,” Sensei said. “The crowing of a rooster kills them dead.”

“That’s silly,” Clarice said, “a crowing rooster kills a deadly, giant snake?”

“Some magic is quite silly when you think about it,” Sensei smiled.

“So, where is this basilisk thing?” Harry asked.

“I will tell you, Harry. I promise. But not until you are ready to deal with the Horcruxes and that ruddy snake. Same with the locations of the Horcruxes, not until you are ready. When you are ready, you will decide what to do and when. Until you are ready - and that won’t be for some time - there’s no reason for you to know as there’s nothing you can do with the information. Besides, although I believe Minerva here can be trusted with this information, the less she knows now, the better.”

“Why?”

“Dumbledore,” Sensei said. “If he suspects she knows something, he will try to get that information from her. It’s risky enough that she knows about you three and about what awaits you in the future. Dumbledore’s big mistake was withholding information. I admit I am doing it too, but only because it is of no use to anyone - yet. Dumbledore withholds information that can be of use - even now he does so. He never told me half of what I’ve told you, or he never explained it to me. I trusted him completely which was a waste for he never truly trusted me. Had he trusted me, things may have been very different. Had I not had blind faith in him, things may have been very different. But they were the way they were.”

“Critical reasoning,” Hermione nodded.

“Exactly! Do not rely on others to tell you everything or to tell you what to do and what needs to be done!”

“May I ask a question?” Robert Granger asked.



“By all means.”

“Why are you telling them all this? I mean, is it age appropriate? They’re only children and I know that although we agreed to take Harry and Clarice into our home, we didn’t agree to this.”

“I appreciate your concern,” Sensei said, “really I do. I was a father once too and - well. But would you hide the truth from your daughter? Would you tell her the world is a wonderful place when all hell is breaking loose?”

“But it sounds like you want them to be warriors or something!”

“Maybe. The truth is, Mr. Granger, there is a storm coming. These three are magical children and the first blows will fall upon their world. True, the enemy sees Harry as a prime target, but Clarice is a close second should they learn of her and should they ever learn of Hermione’s magical family, she will be targeted for death. Would you rather she know nothing about that or learn to be ready for what is out there?

“In my timeline, I was in the thick of it at age eleven. I did not want to be and most certainly was not trained to be. I was a mushroom. The magical adults I knew fed me shit ... manure and kept me in the dark as it were. I was not aware of how things were or how bad things could be until it happened. I was always reacting to events and not making things happen.

“Regardless of our hopes that they can have normal and carefree childhoods, the reality is, by 1992 Harry will have to face the enemy. If the girls are kept out of the fray, it will only be a matter of a few years before the enemy comes for them as well. Would you rather they be defenseless? Would you rather they die as sheep, for die they will in the end unless they are ready. The Clarice in my timeline died in a prison that at the time was only marginally better than the Nazi concentration camps. Hermione only barely escaped that fate and that was more by luck than skill.



“And, if your daughter is anything like the version I knew, she will not sit idly by and do nothing. She will stand up to the enemy and fight and she won’t wait for permission from you or anyone else to do so.

“The wards that will surround you when Harry and Clarice move in with you will keep you safer than you otherwise would have been, but they will not last forever. These three will be safer than they were the last time, but only until Clarice turns seventeen. Once that happens, all bets are off.

“I never knew much of this - not when I needed to. I did not learn I was magical until I turned eleven. I did not learn I was the enemy’s prime target until after his fourth failed attempt on my life. I did not learn how to defeat him until after many I knew and loved had died unnecessarily. Had I known earlier, had I been trained to be the lion and not the lamb, things would have been very different. Later in life, again when it was too late, I learned that it is better to make things happen than to wait for them to happen and hope for the best.

“We have an opportunity not to repeat past mistakes. They will not be helpless when the time comes. When the enemy returns, he will find a fight he had not counted on waiting for him and his followers.”

“But you seem to propose to send children to war,” Rose said.

“In my timeline that’s just what we did - with less than acceptable results.”

“Why?”

“Because the children still had hopes and dreams and something worth fighting for. Most of the adults surrendered or preferred to look the other way or ignore that their world was coming to an end. You field the army that will stand and fight, not the one you would like to stand and fight.

“The conditions that lead to complacency and appeasement - and ultimately disaster - are there now just as they were then. The magical world lacks any clear leader and even amongst them, no strong one. Dumbledore is the most respected, but he is secretive.



He never has tried to build a coalition that could stand up for itself. He shuns power and refuses to muster an army to him, even though he could. Worst, he believes in redemption. That is the stuff of theologians and not the stuff of armies. His path leads to ruin.

"If the adults are unable or unwilling to save the world from evil, then who is left?"

"It's that bad?"

"Not now. We are in the calm before the storm. The wizarding world is at peace and the economy is booming. This is but a respite. The storm clouds will gather and yet the people will believe the storms are gone forever. They have no umbrellas. They don't think such things are needed. If the current generation refuses to train for war, and the last generation refuses to lead in war, who does that leave to defend what is right?"

"That's too much to ask from children so young!"

"If that's what needed to be done tomorrow, then I agree and all is already lost. But the war I speak of will not even begin for at least another seven years. That gives us time: time to learn, time to train, time to prepare and time to win."

"But there are only three of them," Robert protested.

"Around a particle of dust too small to see, a snowflake forms. It joins with others and others and others until conditions are right and the avalanche is set loose. These three may be the dust particles that one day unleashes the avalanche. I am not saying they have to fight or even need to. I leave that decision to them. I was not given that choice. Unlike me, they will be prepared so that if they choose to, they have a fighting chance and do not have to rely upon dumb luck as I did.

"I am not here to steal away their childhood, only to see that they have every opportunity to grow and thrive. I want them to be safe and to live full lives. I just know it won't be easy and will be impossible if they are not ready for the hell we cannot stop from coming. I cannot



take them from you. You are their guardians and I will have to respect your wishes to a major degree. But, I would ask that you look into this Watanabe School. Even if I am totally wrong about the future I know is coming, it is an exceptional opportunity for them. I will leave you once I have assigned the children their homework for this week."

Sensei then discussed more concentration exercises for Harry and Hermione and the first mind lesson to Clarice before fading from sight.

"What do you think of all that Robert?" Rose asked.

"I'm not comfortable with the idea of war, or children fighting."

"Honestly! You lied about your age and joined the Army at sixteen! You were in the S.A.S.! You expect your children to hide their heads in the sand when their country is in need?"

"No," Robert said. "I just hoped it would never be necessary." He sighed. "The war he speaks of is years away. Perhaps we should - er - humor the crazy old coot."

"Perhaps."



## CHAPTER SEVENTEEN: SCHOOLING

SATURDAY, MAY 28, 1988 - ST. BARTHOLOMEW'S CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL, LONDON, U.K.

After Sensei left, the adults left the three children in the room to get to know each other better while they went for a long cup of coffee at a shop down the street from the hospital. A lot had happened and a lot of information had been revealed in a very short period of time. It seemed like a whirlwind to the Grangers and to McGonagall as well, although for different reasons.

As they talked, the Grangers went through the paperwork about their prospective third and youngest child: Clarice. The records included her school records and reports. She was as smart as her older brother, which meant she was probably as smart as Hermione. Hermione was finishing her third year in school. They already knew from Harry's teachers that he was going to be allowed to move from his second year to his fourth year. Based upon the two's birth dates, they both should be in the same year with little Clarice a year behind them. Hermione had started a year early, which was why she was a year ahead of Harry and two years ahead of Clarice. But the reports on Clarice indicated that in all likelihood, she too would skip a year.

The magical information was disturbing. There was a war coming, one that was all but inevitable and the Grangers knew all too well just how bad the last war had been. All three of these precious children were targets in the coming war simply because they had been given life. It was incredibly unfair. The Grangers wanted to agree with Sensei that the children needed to be ready for what lay ahead but were afraid that to see them properly prepared, they would have to ask the three young ones to effectively give up their childhoods.

They now had three magical children to raise. They wanted the best for all three and the best meant the best possible education. For now, that meant St. Michaels, but they knew that one day the three would need to obtain a magical education as well.



They asked McGonagall if she ever had heard about some Watanabe School that taught magic in Japan. They noted how McGonagall frowned for just a moment and awaited her answer.

"I have," she replied slowly. "I must admit, having come from Hogwarts and having taught there for over thirty years, I am biased. Hogwarts is the oldest and best school of magic in Britain, and there are others. It is also one of the best in all of Europe, although there are older schools in Greece, Italy and Spain.

"The European schools do not ordinarily accept students until they are eleven. They also only teach magic. They do not teach non-magical studies such as literature, mathematics or science. The Watanabe School is the oldest in Japan and is about as old as Hogwarts. It too taught only magic for a long time. That changed three hundred years ago. It now also teaches its students non-magical courses. Students can begin there as early as age six.

"There are, in fact, two schools. Most Japanese students attend the yearly school that runs from the middle of August until the middle of June. For the last forty years or so, it has also run a summer program that is open to students from all over the world. That program lasts for three to four weeks and begins around July 1st. As Sensei said, they use some kind of time magic on the school during the summer sessions. We have magic similar to it, but it's different.

"How so? Rose asked.

"Their magic allows the person to experience several days while we outside experience only one. We have a similar charm here, but it cannot cover an entire school and, unlike their Time Compression Charm, ours allows those within to age at the same rate as they experience time. Theirs, on the other hand does not allow the body to age at an accelerated rate.

"Why the difference?"

"Their charm was invented to allow the students to learn quickly. It was a product of the first Shogunate that needed skilled and highly educated wizards to help run the country, but was either unwilling or



unable to wait the decades it would take for them to reach their full potential. The students entered young and left young, then spending a few years as an apprentice in real time before taking on their roles around age eighteen.

“Our Charm was invented for Hogwarts. It was designed so that the occupants would age at an accelerated rate.”

“Why would you want to do that?”

“Arguably, to avoid certain complications associated with having a school full of teenagers and to allow students to avoid the worst of their possible mistakes.”

“Such as?”

“It was installed on a suite of rooms specifically in anticipation of teenage pregnancies,” McGonagall shrugged, “and your daughter is living proof of it.”

“What do you mean?” Rose asked.

“Your daughter was born September 19th, 1979. That was a Wednesday. Her mother found out she was pregnant on September 14th. She decided to give the baby up rather than quit school. She was less than two months pregnant when she learned yet Hermione was full term days later.”

“The time charm?”

McGonagall nodded. “Mother goes in, barely pregnant, comes out a few days later having given birth. To the rest of the school, she was just sick or injured. In almost all cases, the time she spent in the room with the Midwife is erased from her memory. Erin was the exception, as was her boyfriend for they were allowed to be together.”

“Why?”

“She was my great-granddaughter,” McGonagall shrugged. “She was a decent person, not one of the usual patients who are simply



promiscuous and careless. Eric was a decent young man as well. It was my job to erase the memories of the young lovers. I've done it before and since, but I made an exception in their case and I do not regret it."

There was a long silence as the Grangers considered this information. As it was not relevant to the schooling, they decided not to continue.

"So, if we were to send them to this school, they won't come back years older?" Rose asked.

"No," McGonagall said. "They'll have years of education and training, but physically they will age at the normal rate - they will only be three weeks or so older."

"But the babies," Rose began.

"Once they are out of the womb, they age at normal time. It's only when they are in the womb that they age at the accelerated rate."

"Oh," Rose said. It made no sense, but no one said magic had to make any sense. "Back to that school," she added.

"It has an exceptional reputation," McGonagall said, "although I knew few details about it until a few years ago. I was at a convention in Milan, an international convention for magical educators and met a few members of the faculty there. 'Mind, Body, and Magic' is the school motto. They teach non-magical subjects from primary school through university. They teach more magic and more types of magic than we do. And they emphasize physical fitness and training in sports and the martial arts. At that school children have more opportunities in reality than at any magical school here in Britain. It was embarrassing, really.

"You know or you should know that once a child enters a magical school here, their non-magical education stops. They can never go on to university for they have only five years of qualifying education. Not there. There, you can get a full magical education and a university degree, if you want."



“What are you saying, Minnie?” Rose asked.

“She’s my Great-granddaughter,” McGonagall said, “and the other two are very bright as well. Given what appears to be in front of them, if it were me and I could, I’d send them.”

The two Grangers merely nodded for now.

---

Clarice was moved into the room with Harry, although she never really left. All that happened was that a nurse came in with a clipboard which she placed in a holder on what had been the empty bed and then told Clarice it was time for her to have a lie down, helping her into the bed. Clarice went to sleep until supper and Harry and Hermione read books so as not to disturb her. The three ate their supper together in the room. The Grangers and McGonagall went to a nearby restaurant. Afterwards, the Grangers returned and stayed with the children as Hermione and Clarice introduced Harry to Star Trek on the television. Harry thought it was amazing.

When the program was over, the Grangers told everyone it was time for them to take Hermione home for the night. Hermione protested, but Harry and Clarice could see that she was very tired. She soon relented and hugged each of her new friends and kissed Harry on his cheek, promising them both she would be back first thing in the morning. Not long after the Grangers left, a nurse came in and turned out the lights. Harry was already asleep.

Something woke Harry up sometime later. It sounded like someone trying hard to cry quietly. It seemed very close to him and as he slowly regained his senses, he felt a wet weight on his chest. In the darkness, he could just make out long, dark hair on the head resting against him.

“Clarice?”

He saw a small hand seeming to wipe the nose of the head. He heard a snuffle.



“Clarice?” he asked again.

“I’m scared,” she whimpered. “I’m so scared.”

Absently and without thinking, Harry wrapped his arms around her and held her tight. “You don’t have to be,” Harry said.

“But I am! I’ve lost everyone! Everything!”

“Hey,” Harry said soothingly, “yeah, but you found your brother and - and your real family. Besides, don’t you like the Grangers? I do.”

“I never had a brother before,” she cried quietly, “nor a sister, nor a friend. Mum,” her voice hitched, “and Daddy liked me but no one else did. No one else will!”

“Shhhh, that’s not true. I like you Sissy and Hermione does too. You’ll never be alone or friendless again. I promise.”

“You can’t know that. You and Hermione said you never had friends either!”

“That’s why I know it’s true, Sissy. With everything that’s gone on, and it’s all weird and confusing, I think we were meant to meet and for us to become a family again.”

“Are you sure?”

“As sure as I can be.”

“Thanks Harry.” She soon fell asleep in her big brothers arms and he soon followed.

---

No one was there in the Headmasters office at Hogwarts to notice. Dumbledore was attending a conference on the Continent and had



left that afternoon not long after his meeting with McGonagall. When he was away, no one entered the office for any reason.

Moments after he left, the various instruments on the bookshelf slowly came back to life. Their movements announced a change that he would have taken particular interest in had he been there. But the change went unobserved. The movements became more lively throughout the remainder of the day, slowly returning to their original motions, ones they had exhibited for years. Shortly after midnight, the instruments stopped abruptly.

At the same time, seemingly throughout Britain, witches and wizards of all ages forgot something. They would not remember that they had forgotten something or what that something was for years. It was a name for most, two names for a few. Harry and Clarice Potter had become lost to memory. Only two remained who remembered they had ever existed. Minerva McGonagall was unaffected by the magic that had just occurred and was in her study coming up with a list of questions she had for Sensei. Far away, in a dark cell in a prison, a large black dog also remembered. It was the memory of that boy and girl that kept him sane.

---

---

SUNDAY, MAY 29, 1988 - ST. BARTHOLOMEW'S CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL, LONDON, U.K.

Hermione arrived the next morning bright and early just as Harry and Clarice were finishing their breakfast.

"Morning!" she sang out as she all but burst into the room. Harry and Clarice were seated at a small table and Hermione took another chair at the table. "So, Harry, what did you think of Star Trek?"

"It was brilliant," Harry replied.

"Good."

"Why?"



"Because it's the one show on the telly that's not educational that my Mum and Dad let me watch - well that and re-runs of the original series."

"Me too," Clarice said with a smile. "It's my favorite!"

"So, how was your night?" Hermione asked.

"I was very sad and scared," Clarice said. "I was crying and Harry was asleep and, well, when I was at home my Mum would hold me when I was sad so I - er - I held Harry. He woke up and held me too and I wasn't sad or scared anymore. Then he called me a sissy." Clarice pouted.

"You didn't!" Hermione scolded.

"Th-that's," Harry tried to defend himself, "that's not what I meant! I called her Sissy..."

"So you did! You were picking on your sister when she was hurt and..."

"NO! Hermione that's not what I meant! I meant Sissy, as in sister or little sister! Clarice I am so sorry!"

Clarice started to giggle and Harry knew he had been pranked. He had known his sister less than a day, and she was already pranking him. Deep down, he knew this was a good thing, but he couldn't let her get away with it. "You're so going to get it one day," he growled, not really meaning it. Clarice stuck her tongue out at him and when it dawned on Hermione that Clarice was having Harry on, she could not help but giggle too.

Harry and Hermione spent the rest of the morning telling Clarice everything they had learned over the past few weeks right up until Clarice had arrived. Neither of them thought they were anywhere near as good at telling the saga as Sensei had been, but they felt they did a good job of hitting all the major points. By the end, it was clear that Clarice was in a bit of a mood. She was pacing the floor, or



trying to as she still had a noticeable limp, favoring her left leg. She had a very serious expression on her face and seemed to be thinking. Several minutes went by after Harry and Hermione were done talking before she said anything.

“So,” Clarice said, “let me get this straight. We’re all magical and all descended from very important magical families?”

“Yep,” Harry said.

“And there’s this evil wizard out there who killed most all of our families and tried to kill Harry and would have tried to kill Hermione too?”

“So it seems,” Hermione said.

“And he had loads of followers who were almost as nasty as he was and they’re either in jail or hiding because they think he’s dead but he really isn’t and so long as those horcrux thingies exist he can come back and will probably try to kill us again?”

“Yup,” Harry said.

“And sometime in the next six to eight years he will come back?”

“According to Sensei,” Hermione said.

“But you have no reason to doubt it?”

Hermione shrugged. “I don’t know what to think, Clarice. Honestly.”

“But it’s better to assume that Sensei is right than to assume everything is fine when it isn’t,” Clarice said.

“That would be prudent,” Hermione nodded.

“And right now the one person who can help Harry and by that help us all thinks Harry must die?”

“Unfortunately.”



“And if we do nothing, we’ll learn nothing and be killed as well!”

“Fair assessment, I think.”

“You mentioned some school in Japan? What about that?”

“Donno,” Harry said. “Sensei mentioned it in passing. Sounds like it’s better than waiting. No idea how much better.”

“I say we go!” Clarice declared. “Too many have died for nothing! We go! We learn as much as we can and hopefully when the time comes we won’t be killed!”

“I want to, you know,” Harry said. “Not sure it’s that easy.”

“I want to too,” Hermione said. “It’s up to my parents, I think.”

“So,” Clarice said, “worst case is we don’t go and Sensei teaches us what he can, right?”

The other two nodded.

“But, if we all want to go, maybe we can go.”

“It’s got to cost a fair bit of money,” Hermione began.

“Sensei said something about Clarice and I having a fair bit,” Harry said. “When the grownups arrive, I think we should tell them we want to go. What’s the worst that could happen?”

“They could say no,” Clarice said.

“Story of my life,” Harry replied. “If we don’t ask...”

“We’ll never know,” Hermione finished. “Right then, we are going to beg them to send us to this school!”

“Agreed,” the other two answered.



---

The Grangers and McGonagall arrived just as the three children were finishing their lunch. The door opened and the adults entered already engaged in a conversation and, as the children noted, Sensei took this time to make his appearance.

"It was the strangest thing," McGonagall said. "I mean the news of Harry's supposed demise was huge! I've been teaching at Hogwarts for well over thirty years and when stories like that hit the press, the students and faculty - well, it's all they can talk about for weeks. This morning at breakfast? Nothing. It's as if Harry never existed! I've never seen the like! It's as if Harry never existed at all!"

"Maybe they just forgot about it," Rose suggested.

"I doubt it. News like that? Harry Potter is - well - he has children's stories and comic books about him and such. It's all rubbish and goodness knows who's making money off of his name. Still, he was huge news and suddenly he's not? It's not normal even for us."

"It's not all that surprising," Sensei said.

"What do you mean?"

"It's the blood wards forming, Minerva. Moreover, it means they are forming properly unlike before."

"I still don't..."

"The wards do two things, they protect the family and they hide them. The protection wards will not fully form until after Harry starts living with the Grangers, but the hiding Wards do not require a geographic anchor. The first sign that the Wards are working is that those whom Harry does not trust will forget he exists. Only certain kinds of magic can see through that ward. One is Harry's trust, which he has for you as you can see me and that part of my magic is similar. Another is blood relationship, which would allow Petunia Dursley to remember Harry had she lived and will allow Clarice to remember him. A third is



the relationship that is forming between Harry and the Grangers. The final is the bonding between Harry and his Godparents.

“So Sirius Black will remember him?”

Sensei nodded. “Speaking of that, any progress with the rat?”

“Haven’t had time yet. You only mentioned him yesterday.”

“I understand, but I assume you cannot stomach a clear miscarriage of justice any more than I can.”

“This week. I promise.”

“Um...Mum? Daddy?” Hermione asked.

“Yes Sweetie,” Rose Granger answered for both of them.

“Um, well you see, um, well...Harry and I told Clarice everything we could remember about what Sensei has told us about - er - Voldemort and the magical world and stuff and - um - well, we talked about it and - er - well, there’s danger out there and we think we need to be - um - ready for it when it comes and... Well, Sensei said something about a magic school in Japan? One we could go to like this year? And we were talking about that and - well - we would like to.”

“To what, Dear?”

“I mean if we can. We would like to go there so we can start learning as soon as possible.”

“You all feel this way?”

All three nodded.

“Funny you should mention that,” Rose said. “You see your Daddy, Minnie and I were discussing that very thing just last night.”

“And?” the three asked.



“Well, we don’t know what it costs or how to apply, but we think it’s the thing to do.”

“Y-you do?” Hermione asked.

“If Sensei is right,” Robert added, “then this Voldemort nutter is coming back about six years from now and there will be a war and you three will be involved whether you want to be or not. Neither your mother or I am thrilled with the idea, but there it is. We would prefer that this could be put off until you are all adults and such, but it doesn’t look like we’ll get our wish.

“As parents it’s our job to raise you: to see to it that you learn as much as you can so you can achieve your full potential in life, to see to it that you are ready for what’s out there when the time comes for you to be adults. We want you to have full, long and happy lives and one day to have families of your own. Normally, we would want to shelter you from all the bad that is in this world until you are ready to face it - and that means until you are adults. It seems that time is not on our side, so then it is our job as your parents to try as hard as we can to make sure you are ready to face what’s out there as soon as you have to. We do have one concern, though.”

“What’s that, Daddy?”

“We don’t want you three to miss out on your childhoods, and we pray you will not. Still...” Robert turned to Sensei. “Okay, how do we make this happen?”

“First things first,” Sensei said. “Does Hermione have a magical guardian?”

“She does indeed,” McGonagall said. “I was so designated at birth.”

“Excellent! One down, two to go. Right now, as I understand it, Dumbledore is in effect the magical guardian for Harry and Clarice. Fair bet, should he be asked about this, he would never grant permission or allow any trust funds to pay for it. Then again, he is only the magical guardian because he saw to it that the Will of James



and Lilly Potter was ignored. If challenged, in a fair court he could be in serious trouble, but...”

“As head of the Wizengamot,” McGonagall said, “he is in effect the Chief Justice of our courts. A case against him for that would never see the inside of the courtroom.”

“Doesn’t he have to step aside if his interests are at issue?” Robert asked.

“Not under magical law,” Sensei said. “As head of the Wizengamot he holds a lot of power and influence. The Wizengamot acts as both the magical Parliament and the Courts and he is head of both. He has significant control over what laws are passed and, to a degree, which ones are enforced. And, as head of the Wizengamot he is in effect the magical guardian of all magical children without magical parents or guardians, until someone else accepts the position.

“Under the Will left by Harry and Clarice’s parents, that was to have been their Godfather. But the Will also named others who could be appointed if the Godfather was either unable or unwilling to serve. Among those it named was you, Minerva.”

“Why that means...” McGonagall began.

“If the Grangers consent of course.”

“Consent to what?” Robert asked. “What does that mean?”

“To understand the nuances of British wizarding law, you must recognize a few simple yet disturbing truths,” Sensei said. “The entire structure of the current magical government and entire body of law derives from the International Statute of Secrecy. This statute really is not a statute so much as a treaty between independent wizarding governments to uphold certain values and standards, most notably the need to keep the magical world secret from the non-magical world.

“The statute was passed at an international convention of witches and wizards in 1690. The signatories were representatives from all over Europe, with the exception of Luxembourg who refused to sign



because they felt it failed to provide any standards of conduct or even general principles and left too much to each country to decide. The Luxembourg delegate had a point. Each country was able to draw up its code of laws to comply with the statute as it saw fit with only minimal oversight from the other signatories. Thus, the laws vary throughout Europe to a major degree and Europe is more conservative than say Japan or North America.

“Britain is the most conservative. Whereas in places like Japan the magical peoples hide in plain sight, that is they live and work amongst their non-magical countrymen and have forever, Britain just hides. Our entire nation and economy is separate and hidden from the rest of Britain and Ireland. While there are some interconnections, they are minimal and for the most part hidden from both worlds. Most witches and wizards raised in the magical world know absolutely nothing whatsoever about the non-magical world. Few comprehend such things as television, theaters, telephones, automobiles or airplanes, for example. Oddly, it is much easier for a person from a non-magical upbringing to adapt to the magical world than the other way around.”

“Why?” Clarice asked.

“Several reasons. First off, non-magical fairy tales, stories and works of fantasy fiction, while not totally accurate, do describe aspects of the magical world such that the average non-magical person has an idea of what it is like. The same is not true for the magical world. Few stories are written that even discuss the non-magical world and the few that do are totally inaccurate to put it mildly. To say that the average magical person raised in the British magical world has no understanding of the rest of humanity is an understatement. They are clueless.

“Lack of understanding and communication leads to fear, fear leads to distrust and distrust to contempt and even hatred. This insular, isolationist and xenophobic attitude is reflected in the laws and the culture to a distressing degree. The one example I will use for illustration - and I use it because it is relevant - is the status of magical children from non-magical families and their parents.



“Education in magical Britain is what might be termed quasi-compulsory through the age of seventeen. It is not-compulsory for children from magical families - in other words children whose parents are both magical. They have the option to send their children to one of the magical schools, usually the one they themselves attended, although there are exceptions. They may also home school their children if they so desire. Most families send their children. However, in the magical aristocracy, there are notable exceptions. The custom is that all boys do attend school. Girls not so much. The Pureblood aristocracy will only send their daughters to school if they have no sons or if they have not managed to arrange a suitable marriage for the girl by the time she is eleven.”

“Sounds almost medieval,” Rose commented.

“Arguably it is,” Sensei agreed. “Now the rules are different for magical children raised in non-magical families. Attendance at a magical school is compulsory and in reality, their parents have little or no say about it. Under the law, all such children have a magical guardian who acts in loco parentis - that is as the parent at law. In cases such as Harry, as he was deemed a ward of the Wizengamot, that is Dumbledore. In Hermione and Clarice’s case, it would be Dumbledore as well, because once invited to a magical school, the Headmaster becomes such child’s magical guardian, unless...”

“Unless,” McGonagall said, “the child already has a magical guardian, one selected by the child’s parents.”

“One whom they trust,” Robert added.

“One whom they know will act in the best interest of the child and the child’s family,” Rose said.

“Let me guess,” Sensei said, “Minerva is Hermione’s magical guardian?”

The other three adults nodded.

“She was from the day we adopted Hermione,” Rose explained. “We had a long discussion about what to expect with Minnie and



Hermione's birth parents. If we allowed the system to run our child's life, as I understood it we would lose Hermione to the magical world - forever. With a more sympathetic guardian, while that still can happen, it will not happen because of the system. It also means that if we disagree with the system, we have the right to send our child where we want - through Minerva. I take it you're suggesting Harry and Clarice need a magical guardian?"

Sensei nodded.

"Why?" Harry asked.

"Well," Sensei answered, "for one, you all want to go to the Watanabe School in Kyoto, right?"

Harry and the other children nodded.

"And the Grangers and Minerva want to be able to send you there. Under our laws, the Grangers cannot send you, it must be your magical guardian who applies and gives you legal permission. Likewise, the school is not free and I doubt the Grangers can afford to send all three of you, but you two, Harry and Clarice, have trust funds. The Grangers cannot access those funds as they are in a magical bank. A magical guardian can. Finally, I've told you a fair bit about your current magical guardian. I wouldn't trust him. The Grangers, as your legally designated foster, parents have what's called 'power of attorney' over you and until they are contested, they have the authority to consent to a reassignment of magical guardian."

Minerva Constance Abigail McGonagall was already the magical guardian over her great-granddaughter Hermione Jean Granger. A short magical ceremony later and she became the magical guardian over one Harry James Potter and his sister Clarice Lillian Jameson.

Soon thereafter, Robert Granger frowned.

"Something wrong Dear?" Rose asked.

"While I agree that this Watanabe School seems like a good idea, ever since I've heard of it I am forced to wonder what Sensei's



agenda is. I mean this whole time we've been discussing it, we've also learned that a magical war is coming and Harry will be in the thick of it - and that the girls are prime targets for the enemy. And here's this school where over the next four summers they'll finish university and get more magical teaching than they can here? What is it? About four years per summer? Sensei?"

"Yes?" Sensei replied.

"Are you trying to turn them into weapons? I probably know more about what they may be facing than you think, and from where I am standing it seems that you're trying to turn these kids into powerful warriors who can stand and fight before they even enter puberty. Just how powerful will they become with all that preparation?"

"Ah," Sensei said. "It would appear that way, wouldn't it? The time spell on the school does not allow them to age any faster than they would if they just stayed here and played in the local park. That spell prevents both accelerated physical and accelerated magical aging. By the time they finish, magically and physically they'll be ten and eleven years old. Mentally and from a standpoint of magical and physical skills, they'll be in their mid-twenties or so."

"That's my point!"

"Let me ask you this then. If a ten-year-old child is a master at a martial art, do you think he or she could win against an equivalent master who's in their mid-twenties? Even if there is no difference in their level of skills?"

"No. Not without their opponent making a mistake."

"Why not?"

"All else being equal, the older one has a decided advantage in size and strength."

"The same thing applies to magic. They might well have the skills and knowledge of someone who has trained for up to twenty years, but their magic will not have grown twenty years. Magically, while their



training will probably leave them at their maximum potential for their age, they still will be kids. Just like their bodies, they will not really begin to grow into their full potential until they are adolescents and not reach their full potential in terms of power until their early to mid twenties.

“Magic is not unlike your muscles. You exercise it and train it and you increase strength, speed and agility. But there is a limit to how far you can go at any point in your life. They will be in exceptional ‘magical shape,’ and may well maximize their potential, but they will still be like the eleven-year-old martial-arts master and still be at a disadvantage to a similarly trained adult.”

“So what’s the point then?”

“Assume the same eleven-year-old is facing an untrained arrogant street thug. Who will win?”

“Hard to say,” Robert said.

“Ah, but who has the advantage?”

“The one trained. A lucky blow cannot be discounted, but the trained combatant would be in a better shape to take out the thug or get away unscathed. Same’s true in the military. Training usually trumps brute force even where the enemy has a sizable advantage in numbers.”

“Exactly,” Sensei smiled. “While Voldemort is someone they won’t be able to face at his full strength for some time - and fortunately he’s not going to be a factor in combat for years - most of his minions are your untrained arrogant street thugs. Fortune is still a factor, but the advantage lies in training. And remember, I never said and will not say they have to fight. They can prep the battlefield, and they will be encouraged to do that. But so long as the battlefield is prepped and an army is in the field, they may not be required to actually engage. The training I recommend through that school and will offer if that is not in the cards is to keep them alive and safe so they can at least lay the groundwork for success.”



“That’s it?”

“I came back much earlier than expected,” Sensei said. “My tasking in that event was to help Harry here save lives. There are many whose lives were ruined before I even started school who they may be able to help and many others who died needlessly because I was too ill informed to help in my timeline. My first task if I came back early was to save Harry from the Dursleys and take him out from under Dumbledore’s thumb. I have succeeded if only by a strange twist of fate. My next tasking before Hogwarts was to help Harry help some others.”

“Why should they even go to that place?” Minerva asked. “I mean, if they complete four summers in Japan, there’s nothing for them there.”

“Harry needs to be there,” Sensei said. “I do not trust Dumbles at all. But Harry will be beyond his ability to control by the time he’s supposed to begin his education. Harry will already have his NEWTs, and you know what that means.”

“He’ll legally be an adult in our world.”

“And will be intellectually and from a skills standpoint. Not physically, magically and maybe not in terms of emotional maturity, but he’ll know more than most which I hope would tend to overcome his other disadvantages inherent in one so young. Hogwarts is the key to everything! There are two of those vile Horcruxes there as we speak and a third will be there in time. By the time he starts, three others should be either secured or destroyed. Thus, not long after he starts, only the one we cannot get to yet - the one in the Gringotts vault - will remain.

Harry and the others will most likely have to face the same challenges I did when I first went there. In fact they must! If they don’t, Dumbles will allow conditions that assure Voldemort returns much sooner. But they will not be the true challenges I faced because of their training. But there is another reason why they should go there.”

“And that is?” Minerva asked.



"If they are friends with the Hufflepuff Heir when she starts, what can they find there?" Sensei asked.

"Sweet Merlin! You're talking about the Founders' Tower! That's just a myth!"

"So is the Chamber of Secrets, but I can assure you that is quite real."

"But the school has been searched!" Minerva protested. "Countless times."

"Only one versed in the ways of the Serpent can ever find that Chamber, Minerva," Sensei said. "I have that ability, as does Harry and quite possibly Clarice. The only other one who has ever set foot in Hogwarts with that ability - and used it - was Tom Riddle, now known as Voldemort. Hence, should the magical heirs of the Founders return in fellowship..."

"The tower can be restored," Minerva said. "My word! Do you know what that means?"

Several voices said "No."

"The tower was supposedly the residences of the Founders," Minerva continued. "It is said to have vanished when the last of them passed away and has never been seen since. It is said it cannot reappear unless the founders' lines come together again as friends. But if they do?"

"There are libraries of ancient knowledge there - supposedly - long lost to our world. It would be like finding the Library of Alexandria intact with all that was said to have been lost!"

"Indeed," Sensei agreed.

"Cool," Hermione said.



“Why?” Harry asked. And Hermione then explained what the Library of Alexandria was.



## CHAPTER EIGHTEEN: MINERVA'S WEEK

MONDAY, MAY 30, 1988 - HOGWARTS SCHOOL OF WITCHCRAFT AND WIZARDRY, SCOTLAND, U.K.

Minerva McGonagall waited in her classroom with three others just after classes had finished for the day. The three others were not members of the faculty or staff, but had been requested by Minerva for this meeting as she was acting Headmistress of the school while her boss was out of the country on business. She knew it would intimidate the three students she had called in for an immediate meeting, but if the information Sensei had provided her was correct, she could care less.

Three red haired students entered. All were obviously concerned and the youngest who was carrying a small cage with some kind of animal in it looked terrified. The tallest of the three was William Weasley who preferred to be called "Bill." He was a sixth year Prefect from Gryffindor House, the House that Minerva was in charge of for all matters. The next was a shorter and stockier lad in his fourth year at school. Charlie Weasley was the younger brother of Bill and was the best player on the House Quidditch team, the only sport played at the school. With Dustin Corbenroth slated for graduation in but a few weeks, Charlie was the first pick for next year's team Captain. The last boy was shorter than any of the others - for now. He had recently turned twelve. Percy was a first year and he looked terrified. The older two noticeably paled seeing the three other adults in the room. The youngest looked like he was about to lose his lunch, breakfast and any scrap of food left in his system.

"I see you brought the pet as requested," McGonagall said in her stern voice.

"Yes Professor," Bill Weasley replied. "Is something wrong? Did my little brother do something to embarrass our House or worse our family?"

"No, Mr. Weasley. So far as I am aware, Percy is the first Weasley who made it this far into First Year without losing so much as a single house point or seeing a single hour of detention. If only my other



students were so compliant. I thank the stars he has not followed either your's or your younger brother's example - at least at that age. Then again, perhaps the fact that he has not led his year in detentions may be an embarrassment?"

"How many Howlers have you received from Mum?" Bill asked his younger brother Percy.

"Better yet, Howlers not related to grades?" Charlie added.

"None," Percy said meekly.

"None?" Bill asked. "Not a one?"

Percy shook his head.

"You pulled no pranks?" Charlie asked.

Percy shook his head again.

"We apologize for our brother," Bill said. "Despite our best efforts, it is clear he has a learning disability."

"Unlike the twins," Charlie added. "They'll make us look like model students, they will."

"You guys got in trouble?" Percy asked.

"Loads!" Charlie replied. "Least through third year."

"Since then not so much," Bill added. "Or better yet we learned how not to get caught. Trick is, little bro, always keep your grades up, but learn how to have fun too. Otherwise you are wasting your time here!"

"Professor?" Charlie asked. "We promise that in the few weeks left Percy here will uphold the honor of our family!"

"He will make history for a prank of epic proportions," Bill added.

"That will land him in lengthy detention!"



“And earn a well deserved Howler from our humorless Mum!”

“And thereby uphold the Weasley name!”

“Is that what you wanted to see us about, Professor?” Bill finished.

“Do you honestly think I called you in here to encourage misbehavior?” McGonagall asked.

“Well, no not really,” Bill replied. He then turned to Percy and added: “But just because Professor McGonagall said that does not give you the excuse to skive off pranking! Dad considers it an essential part of your educational experience.”

“He never said that to me,” Percy protested.

“He only gives that talk after you get your first Howler from Mum,” Charlie said, “and then, only when Mum cannot find out about it.”

“Oh.”

McGonagall shook her head and tried to suppress a smile. The older Weasley boys pranks had been very amusing. It had been hard to scold them, place them in detention and dock points, harder still doing so with a strait face.

“No, actually we are here because there have been some complaints from some other students about Percy’s rat.”

“Scabbers?” Percy said. “But he doesn’t do anything.”

“This is not about what he may have done,” McGonagall said. “It seems that someone has complained that you have an unauthorized and unregistered pet.”

“But Professor,” Percy protested, “you said I could!”

“I know, I know. This is just a formality I assure you. Ms. Pierson here is from the Department of Regulation and Control of Magical



Creatures, Pet Licensing Bureau. She's here to make sure your little friend is properly registered and legal, okay?"

Percy nodded.

"She'll be asking a few questions and will check out your rat to make sure it's what it appears to be."

"So," Ms. Pierson asked, "how did you get your rat?"

"Found him," Percy said. "He was freezing in the garden at our home after a snowstorm just after Christmas."

"Took a shine to the boy," Charlie added.

"When was this?" Ms. Pierson asked.

"I was five then," Percy said. About six and a half years ago."

"Really? Interesting. Even in captivity, rats such as yours typically do not live more than about four years. Perhaps it is magical?"

"He doesn't seem to be," Percy said.

"Well, let's find out then," Ms. Pierson said drawing her wand. She cast a silent spell which impressed the boys and then frowned. "This is no rat," she said.

"What?" several voices asked.

"I could be wrong, but unless I am, this is an animagus."

"One way to find out," a tall dark skinned man said. "Place the cage on the ground, if you please," he asked of Percy as he drew his own wand. Percy complied and went pale as the rat began to squeal and seemingly try to chew through the wooden cage in terror. A spell was cast and the cage exploded as the rat transformed into a raggedly dressed balding man. His watery eyes looked at the others in terror. But before he could even think of fleeing, he found himself bound in ropes.



“Peter Pettigrew,” McGonagall gasped! Her opinion of this Sensei had just jumped.

“I have nothing to say,” the man squeaked.

“We shall soon see about that,” the dark skin man said calmly. “I am Kingsley Shacklebolt with the Auror’s office, Death Eater. With me is Amelia Bones, Chief Prosecutor for the Ministry of Magic. I assume you know what Veritaserum is?”

“I have nothing to say!”

“Madam Bones?”

“Do you duty, Auror Shackelbolt.”

Over the next several minutes a full confession was obtained from Pettigrew, all duly noted for the record. He had hated James Potter and his close friends Remus Lupin and Sirius Black for years. He hated the fact they were better than he was at everything, a loathing that had driven him to join the Death Eaters right out of school. To earn his mark and the recognition of the Dark Lord, he first lied about his blood lines and then killed several muggles for sport. By chance, he was named the Secret Keeper to protect the whereabouts of the Potters once the Prophecy about Harry Potter had been told to Voldemort. Despite this, it had taken him over a year before he could finally betray the Potters. After the murder of the Potters it was Sirius Black who tracked him down and cornered him in a muggle market. Pettigrew blew the place up and escaped as a rat leaving a very innocent Black to take the fall and rot in prison.

“Will the Ministry release him?” McGonagall asked about Black.

“The Minister recently reopened the case against Black following Dumbledore’s failure with the Potter matter,” Amelia Bones said. “He was scheduled for a real trial, but with this evidence? My guess is he’ll be transferred to St. Mungos this week for evaluation and therapy and then, in a couple of months or so, he’ll be released.”



“He will be exonerated?”

Ms. Bones nodded. “We could have had an acquittal without Pettigrew. Now? Not even the press can question his innocence!” With that, Pettigrew was hauled away and after the Ministry officials left McGonagall dismissed three very stunned Weasley boys.

MONDAY, MAY 30, 1988 - GRINGOTTS BANK, LONDON, U.K.

Later that evening, McGonagall had finished her initial meeting with Ragnok, Director of Gringotts Wizarding Bank. Ragnok was a goblin as were most of Gringotts’ employees, yet he seldom ever met with mere humans. He made an exception for Minerva solely because she was now the guardian over his bank’s most favored account - the Potter Estate. Minerva had the impression after the meeting that Ragnok was far more impressed with her than the prior estate guardian: Dumbledore. She commented on that fact and was told that she bothered to treat the goblins with respect and as equals. In Ragnok’s opinion, Dumbledore acted as if he had no equals.

As with Hermione, Harry and Clarice had trust funds set up to pay for their education and their day to day expenses. Minerva was shocked at the amounts. Hermione’s trust was worth about 100,000 Galleons. That was 500,000 Pounds at Gringotts exchange rates and over ten million if said Galleons were exchanged on the open market as each coin was one once pure gold. Each of the Potters’ trust accounts was worth at least fifty times as much. The trusts were set up solely to provide for Harry and Clarice until they reached the age of majority or were otherwise declared adults. The initial trust funding was one percent of the total value of the estimated Potter Estate. Harry and Clarice were quite wealthy.

After a couple of hours, Minerva was convinced that the Potter estate was generally well managed. The Trust accounts earned very favorable returns and the main estate seemed to be doing as well. Confident in the finances, she broached her main concern - the desire for the Potters and Hermione to attend the Watanabe School of Magical Studies in Japan. To Minerva’s surprise, Hirayuki Genda had traveled to Gringotts to discuss the application.



Genda was the Dean of Admissions for the international summer session. Minerva had met him before at several international magical education conferences and she knew him well. As a professor, she knew that Genda was considered an expert and exceptional teacher in mind and wandless magic - two courses that were not taught in British schools.

"It is a pleasure to meet you again, Professor McGonagall," Genda in flawless English said as he bowed. It was always a little unnerving for McGonagall knowing he was Japanese and hearing his flawless, if American accented English.

"The pleasure is mine, Gendasan," McGonagall replied returning the bow. "Honestly, I am surprised that you are here."

"I was in London on business, Minerva," Genda replied. "I received a note from Gringotts that someone was interested in sending their children to our school. It's been over twenty years since anyone from this country applied, so naturally I was intrigued. I was unaware that you had children."

"They are not mine per se," McGonagall replied. "One is my Great-granddaughter. Her name is Hermione Granger and she's eight. I am her magical guardian. The other two are under her parent's care and I am their magical guardian as well. One is Harry Potter, age seven and the other is his younger sister age six."

"Harry Potter?" Genda asked. "Not the one all those insipid books are about?"

"He is, although he is nothing like the fictional character in those books. The books are slanderous to say the least. I am quite certain he never killed a dragon - and certainly not at the age of three and a half."

"Indeed," Genda nodded. "Now perhaps you might tell me about these three applicants?"

McGonagall spent the next several minutes telling all she knew about the three children, with emphasis on their academic achievements to



date. She tried to be as objective as possible in assessing their abilities and potential, but felt as if she was failing miserably. She could not help it, she thought. In her opinion each of the three were quite admirable in their own way.

Genda nodded. "A most impressive group, Minerva," he said finally. "I know you may be a little biased, but I do not doubt the veracity of your assessment. I'm sure they would do quite well in Kyoto. Might I inquire as to whether you would like them to attend this Summer Term?"

"Is it possible?"

"Today is the last day for submitting an application," Genda said. "As Dean of Admissions, I can accept the application verbally. All I need is their mailing address, payment of the tuition in advance and proof that they can acquire the necessary passports if they do not currently have one."

"What is the tuition?"

"25,000 pounds per academic year. They will progress through five such years each summer that they are in attendance up to a maximum of twenty years. For this summer, that would be 125,000 pounds - 500,000 for the full term of four years."

"Pounds?"

"Actually, they will be converted to Yen. Japan is in many ways the opposite of Britain. We do not hide away from our non-magical neighbors as you do here. We do not have an economy totally separate from that of our neighbors. As such, we use non-magical currency. Galleons, as you use here, are only valuable as commodities, in other words if they are sold for their gold.

"Our magical society is very open as compared to Britain. Oddly, our non-magical society is comparatively closed as compared to non-magical Britain. Our non magical countrymen do not trust foreigners. Of course, that's not true for everyone, but it is the prevailing attitude dating back centuries. Our concession to the isolationist tendencies



of the vast majority of Japanese is that we teach foreigners during the summer. True, we will have a fair few Japanese students as well, mostly from magical families or progressive non-magical ones.”

“And what kind of education are we talking about?” McGonagall asked. “Forgive my ignorance, but I am afraid your assessment of magical Britain may be charitable. I regret I know little about magical education outside of Europe and what little I do know is in no small part due to the wonderful seminars of yours that I have had the pleasure to attend in the past.”

“As I understand it,” Genda said, “here in Britain and throughout much of Europe, children do not begin their magical education until the age of eleven?”

McGonagall nodded.

“Pity. And I also understand they are not required attend non-magical schools at all before hand?”

She nodded again.

“Over the centuries, we have found that to maximize one’s potential in life, there must be harmony between the mind, magic and body. The earlier the child begins to learn such harmony, the more they can learn and the better they will become. Our children begin their studies at the age of six and they study non-magical courses in addition to magic. They learn to read and write, learn languages, math, and the sciences, history, art and literature. Once they complete their non-magical secondary education, they may continue on to the University level. Among the required course at that level is three semesters of philosophy, again to expand the mind.

“Magically, we teach the same studies as you do here as we are signatories of the ICW Educational Treaties and our students are expected to sit for the ICW O.W.L. and N.E.W.T. examinations. Your children should sit for their O.W.L. exams at the end of this summer term and their N.E.W.T.s about mid way through their second summer.”



“And after that?”

“Depending upon their N.E.W.T.s, of course, they can continue to study for Masters Level certifications. Most students obtain at least one, many more than one. In theory, depending upon the Masters Levels they seek, a student can attain as many as five by the end of their fourth summer.”

“Five?” McGonagall asked in shock.

“Few are that ambitious,” Genda said. “Three Masters Levels are about average.”

“Even three is more than most,” McGonagall said. “So far as I know, only Albus has that many.”

“Indeed,” Genda said. “From an educational standpoint, we do not think highly of Europe. You all seem to place little emphasis on formal education for your magical children as compared to the East and the Americas.”

There was no denying that, McGonagall thought as she nodded. “Why do you start them so young?”

“We teach wandless magic, non-verbal spell casting and various forms of mind magic. We find the young are better able to learn and master theses than adolescents. Relying upon wands suppresses the natural abilities such that if those skills are not learned by the time the child is in their late teens they can never be mastered.”

“You said the body is part of the training?”

“Indeed. Physical health and fitness, speed and agility enhances magical ability. We teach our students the martial arts of our ancestors and emphasize physical fitness and sports.”

“So they play Quidditch?”

“Quidditch is foreign to Japan,” Genda said. “Part of our philosophy is to teach the children how to interact with the non-magical world. The



sports they learn and play are the same they would be exposed to in the non-magical world. Besides, Quidditch is not nearly as effective in building a fit body.”

“Interact with the non-magical world?”

“They will be exposed to non-magical technology, including the use of computers and telecommunications technologies. Aside from driving a car or flying an airplane, when they complete school, they could easily live in the non-magical world. My guess is that is not truly the case here?”

McGonagall nodded. “So,” she said after more thought, “how do we get them enrolled?” With that, Genda and McGonagall filled out the necessary paperwork that would enroll the students for the summer, pay their tuition, get their passports and tickets for a flight to Japan on June 28th, and the return flight on July 30th, along with a ticket for an adult to accompany them to and from Japan.

TUESDAY, MAY 31, 1988 - AZKABAN PRISON, THE NORHT SEA

In a dark, cold and damp windowless room, a large dog was lying on the stone floor trying to catch some sleep. It was not easy, it never had been as the dog’s room was not sound proof. Around it were the moans and wails of humans in despair. This dog did not care, it just wanted them to shut up so it could get some sleep.

The dog was not what it appeared to be. It was, in fact, a wizard. He was an animagus and had quickly learned how to transform from his human form to his canine and back again without a wand not long after he was thrown into this dark prison cell. His dog form had significant advantages in this prison.

The prison had two kinds of guards, human and inhuman. The human guards were around only four times a day. Two times to feed the inmates and the other two to take an inmate from their cell to their weekly shower or exercise period. In total, if the human guards were in the cell block more than ninety minutes in a day, it was rare. The rest of the time, the evil Dementors patrolled the block, sucking whatever hope or joy the inmates had from them. Oddly, the



Dementors had little effect on him as a human and none when he transformed into a dog. Most of his neighbors, none of whom he had ever seen, much less spoken to, were now quite mad, stripped of whatever humanity they may have had. The dog, however, was still fairly sane, or so it thought.

The wizard had learned when the Dementors arrived and learned to transform into his dog form when they did. The dog had learned to sense the Demetors and to sense their absence when he could safely change back into human form. The human knew that he had to be human during meals and twice a week - once for a shower and the other for an hours exercise. The rest of the time, he was a dog. He didn't mind. It was a lot warmer with his coat of fur than with the rags his human form wore and the Dementors could not torment him as a dog. He reasoned the reason he was not barking mad - pardon the pun, he thought - was largely because he could avoid the Dementors mind attacks as a dog.

The dog sensed the Demetors leaving and knew a human was soon to enter the cell block. It stood up and transformed back into its human form and decided to sit on the concrete slab that passed for a bed to see what the human guards were up to. It was not yet mealtime, he reasoned. He also knew he was not scheduled for either a wash or an exercise period, which meant most likely that this hell hole was about to entertain an new guest.

To the prisoner's surprise, the keys were inserted into the door to his cell! There was a routine in prison and that routine was really the only way to measure time and achieve any sense of normality. Surprises could never be good.

The Cell door opened and the prisoner shielded his eyes from the light of the torch the guard carried.

"On yer feet Black," the guard demanded.

The prisoner complied slowly and in surprise. "What's goin' on?" he asked in a voice hoarse from un-use.

"Warden wan's ter see yer," the guard growled.



“Bout what?”

“How would I bloody know? Not like the Warden an’ I is best mates hoistin’ pints down a’ the pub now, is it? On yer feet, Black. Warden’s a busy man - least tha’s what ‘e says.”

Sirius Black had spent over six years in the hellhole known to magical Britain as Azkaban prison. He had no idea himself what day or month it was. All he knew was it seemed he had been there forever. The routine of prison was all he could clearly remember and this sudden change from that familiar routine confused him and scared him a little. Thoughts raced through his head as he was ordered to shower. Was he finally going to get his trial? That had to be it.

When he finished showering, he noticed his soiled prison garb was gone and regular clothes awaited him. It was not much, nothing fancy. There was new underwear, blue jeans, a button down plain tan shirt, socks and a pair of not so dressy shoes. Another surprise and one that convinced him it must be a trial. After dressing, he was led to a room he had never seen before. There a barber waited and his hair was cut and his beard shaved for the first time since he had arrived. Somehow, he actually felt lighter when finished.

He was finally led to a Spartan office somewhere in the upper levels of the prison. The office, he noted, had a window and sunlight streamed in. It was the first sunlight he had seen since he arrived here years ago. A short, bald man with wire rim glasses was seated at the desk browsing through a file. A name plate on the desk introduced him: Cadmus Archer, Warden.

“Ave a seat, Black,” the guard said.

Tentatively, Sirius sat in a chair before the Warden’s desk.

“Sirius Orion Black,” the man said in a deep voice. “Sent here 5 November 1981. Charged with the murder of one Peter Pettigrew, mass murder of some twelve muggles, accomplice to the murders of Lily and James Potter, conspiracy to murder one Harry Potter and



suspected Death Eater activities. Says here you were never tried. That true?"

Sirius could only nod.

The Warden merely shrugged his shoulders as if to say: typical. "Before my time," he said.

"What d-day is it?" Sirius asked in a hoarse whisper. His voice was emotionless, a trait he learned in prison as the Dementors fed off of emotions.

"Yes," the Warden said scrutinizing Black, "I guess you would have no idea, would you? It's May 31st, 1988."

"Bloody hell!" Sirius had no idea he'd been here that long. "My godson, Harry Potter?"

"Ah, the famous boy-who-lived?"

Sirius stared at him blankly.

"That's what the press called him," the Warden said. "Bloody stupid name if you ask me, but the Daily Prophet is hardly known for its literary acumen. According to said Prophet, if you're one to believe the rubbish they print as so called news, he died in a house fire a couple of weeks ago."

Sirius was too stunned to reply. He had only two reasons to live, one was his god children and the other was to see the day that Peter Pettigrew finally met the long arm of justice. The godchildren were the more important reasons.

"Well," the Warden says, "seems some idiot at the Ministry finally did their bloody job! You're being transferred, Black."

"W-what?"

"St. Mungo's. Couple of months at least and then - then you're free."



“What? Why?”

“You think you were guilty of the crimes that stuck you with us?”

Sirius shook his head. He knew he was innocent.

“Seems the powers that be agree,” the Warden said. “They caught that supposedly dead Pettigrew chap yesterday. Got a full confession out of him under Veritaserum. Open and shut case for the rat - he’s been living as a rat - some kid’s family pet for years it seems. Minister for Magic herself signed your Exoneration Papers last night. Now, let’s see what we have here.” The Warden began looking into a bag.

“Why St. Mungo’s?” Sirius asked.

“We’ve never freed a long term prisoner before, Black,” the Warden admitted. “Bit of a first. You came in weighing 191 lbs. Your weight is now 105. Goodness knows what other health issues you may have acquired under our care. You’re going there until the Healers give you a clean bill of health, mental and physical, okay?”

Sirius could only nod in reply.

“Your personal effects,” the Warden continued pulling items from the bag. “Wand, key to a Gringotts vault, set of various other keys, money pouch containing: 47 Galleons, 12 Sickels, 15 Knuts as well as 157 Pounds and change. Underground pass card, expired. Wallet containing another 48 Pounds and change, motorcycle license and registration, both expired and a passport, again expired. I believe that’s everything.”

Sirius stared at the meager possessions.

“Go on!” the Warden said. “Gather up your stuff. Auror Shackelbolt is waiting to escort you to the Hospital and I don’t have all day!”

Sirius stood and started to gather his things, still without understanding what was happening.



THURSDAY, JUNE 2 1988 - ST. MUNGO'S HOSPITAL FOR  
MAGICAL MALADIES AND INJURIES, LONDON, U.K.

Sirius had finished his dinner and was lying in his hospital bed reading a book. He had learned that among the various physical problems he had spent while being "a guest of the Ministry," he now needed eyeglasses to read. The book was a work of Muggle literature that he preferred over magical authors. It was called *The Count of Monte Cristo*, it was about a good man imprisoned for a crime he did not commit. The irony was not lost on Sirius.

"Mr. Black?" a soft feminine voice called from the door.

Sirius looked up and over the top of his glasses. Smiling from the doorway was a young, petite blonde he learned was named Sophie Tompkins. She was a Healer in training. Sirius guessed she was about twenty years old. He was twenty-eight, but felt much older and he was sure he looked older too.

"Sophie," Sirius said, "I've told you to call me Sirius, even if I'm not. Mr. Black makes me feel old."

The young woman blushed and smiled at him. "Are you finished eating?" she asked softly.

Sirius nodded.

"And did you take all your potions?"

Sirius rolled his eyes at her and then decided to flirt just a little. "Of course," he said truthfully. "Far be it for me to fail to take my meds. You might then find reason not to visit."

She blushed again. Sirius did not really understand it, but she looked adorable when she blushed. "I'll just clear away your mess then," she said. "Oh, you have a visitor. I'll send her in when I am done." She then smiled at Sirius.



Still got the mojo, you old dog, Sirius thought to himself. She cleared up quickly and gave Sirius a smile before leaving. She's a bit young, Sirius thought, still...

The door opened and the visitor appeared. Sirius again looked up and immediately recognized the woman who had entered. "Professor McGonagall?" he asked.

She smiled at him in a way he had never seen her smile before. "Please, Sirius. I am not here in any kind of official capacity. Please call me Minnie."

He tried not to laugh. "Minnie?"

"It's what family calls me."

"Family? But we're not family."

"Don't be so sure, Sirius."

"What do you mean?" Sirius asked. "I have no family! I've either disowned or been disowned by my blood relations..."

"Not Andromeda."

"Okay, maybe not her, but the others. Harry is dead and Clarice is missing and no one knows where she is - if she's alive at all and..."

"What makes you think that?"

"They told me! They showed me the Daily Prophet! No one even knows about Clarice at all!"

"What did you do with Clarice that night?"

"What Dumbledore said," Sirius replied. "I took her to my girlfriend. She worked for Muggle social services and promised me Clarice would be adopted by someone."



“Indeed,” McGonagall replied. She then reached into her purse and pulled out a photograph and handed it to Sirius.

“It’s a Muggle photo,” she said, “taken last Sunday.”

Sirius looked at the picture. Three children were lying in what looked like a hospital bed. In the center was a boy with messy black hair, green eyes and glasses, a miniature version of his best friend James but for the eyes which were clearly reminiscent of Lily. He had a huge and genuine smile on his face. On his left was a girl in hospital robes with long black hair and the same eyes, smiling and with her cheek pressing against the boy’s. On the boy’s right was another girl with curly brown hair and matching eyes, also with a huge smile on her face as well and pressing her cheek against the boy.

“Harry?” Sirius asked.

McGonagall nodded.

“Who are the two girls?”

“Can you guess - at least about the one to his left?”

“Clarice?”

McGonagall nodded again.

“They’re together?” he asked with tears in his voice.

McGonagall nodded.

“And the other girl?”

“My Great-granddaughter Hermione.”

“B-but your family was wiped out in the War.”

“All but her.”

“I - I don’t understand.”



McGonagall then told him about everything that had happened. She told him about Clarice losing her adoptive parents, the circumstances of Hermione's adoption by a muggle couple and what had happened to her last granddaughter and her husband. She then told about Harry's life and how he had been sent to live with the Dursleys.

"Hold on!" Sirius protested. "Harry and Clarice? James and Lily made it clear they never were to meet the Dursleys! Who did that?"

"It was only Harry, but it was Dumbledore who sent him there."

"Dumbledore? But we trust him!"

"The more I learn about that time, the less I trust the man at least when it comes to the best interests of Clarice and Harry. They should never have been separated and Harry should never have been sent to the Dursleys. He went through hell there."

"Hell?"

"Honestly, I think you may have had an easier time in Azkaban than Harry had as a child at the Dursleys." She then described the abuse and how Harry had wound up in a hospital.

"I'll kill them!" Sirius said. "I'll kill the bastards!"

"They're already dead," Minerva replied. "They died in that house fire the Prophet reported."

"What's to become of Harry and Clarice? I can take them in."

"No Sirius," McGonagall said.

"Why not? I can afford..."

"It's not that! You're going to be here a while. They need a home now! Even after you are discharged, you will need time to get - well - back to normal. You cannot expect to do that with children in your house! The Muggles have assigned Harry and Clarice to the Grangers -



Hermione's adoptive parents. They know about our world and that Harry and Clarice are magical. They have raised Hermione into a fine young lady and the three are now best of friends. It would be wrong to separate them now."

"So I will have no part in their lives?"

"On the contrary, Sirius. I expect you to have a significant role in their lives, just not as their primary caregiver. When you are well and have a place, I expect you to be their friend - all of them including Hermione."

"And Dumbledore?"

"Will know nothing about this! He wanted to 'groom' Harry for a martyr's death. I will have nothing to do with that! As far as these three children are concerned, Dumbledore is EVIL!"

"But he is the leader of the light!"

"And these children are but pawns in his chess game - pawns get sacrificed!"

"What makes you so sure?"

"Who should the children have gone to on their parents death, Sirius? You know that James and Lily would have sent them to you. You were thrown in prison without trial. As their Godfather, I know you could not have betrayed them to Voldemort. So does Albus, and he had it within his power to stop your incarceration - and yet you rotted in prison. Why? He could have prevented the miscarriage of justice with a word, yet it was only recently that you were exonerated and that was my doing and not his. I think that the only reason you are here and not still in Azkaban is that Pettigrew was caught and confessed while Dumbledore was out of the country and could not influence the Minister for Magic - who wanted to reopen your case by the way - to keep you locked up!"

"Does Dumbledore know that Harry and Clarice are alive?"



"No he does not. I have not told him and will not! They are dead to him and to our world - for now. Oh, people still remember Harry, but they no longer believe he was real. For the time being, only you and I really know about Harry, Clarice and Hermione. No one else does and I think we should keep it that way for now. They deserve to have a life, don't you think?"

Sirius nodded. "Can I see them?"

McGonagall nodded. "Soon, Sirius. Maybe not this week, but I will see to it that you see them soon. I think they would like that and I know you would."

"Thanks," Sirius said. "I really want to. Thinking about them kept me going, you know."

"I know," she said softly. "That's why I've told you about them."

Sirius was crying now. He could not know if it was sadness, disappointment in the one man he admired or joy in learning the children were alive, but there were tears none the less. "Remus?" he asked after several minutes.

"I'll see if I can find him, Sirius."

"Thanks - er - Minnie."



## CHAPTER NINETEEN: A HOMECOMMING

SATURDAY, JUNE 4, 1988 - ST. BARTHOLOMEW'S CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL, LONDON, U.K.

"Harry! Clarice!," Hermione practically shrieked with excitement as she entered their room, "we're going home today! We're going home today!" Hermione had a huge and excited smile on her face until she looked at the others. Clarice was sitting with Harry and crying and Harry looked concerned. Hermione's face fell and she pouted. "Don't you want to leave here?" she asked. "Don't you want to be my friends?"

Harry looked at Hermione. "Of course we do," he said. "It's not that at all, Hermione."

"I want my Mum," Clarice wailed. "Why? Why'd she have to die?"

"Clarice's Mum was buried last week," Harry explained. "The Nurse just told us and she's upset 'cause she could not say goodbye."

"I want my Mum!" Clarice wailed.

"I'm so sorry," Hermione said. "I - I guess I forgot that..." She then took a seat next to Clarice and pulled the crying girl into a hug.

"I - I'm so scared," Clarice cried as the Grangers walked in. They kept silent for the time being.

"Of what, Sissy?" Harry asked sharing the hug with Hermione.

"I w-want to ... I want to live with you guys, but..."

"What?" Hermione asked softly.

"I'm afraid if I do - if I do I'll forget all about Mum and Daddy! I'm afraid you all will w-want me to forget!"

"Hush," Hermione said. "We would never do that."



“You loved your Mum and Dad, didn’t you, Sissy?”

“Uh huh.”

“Then we expect you to remember them - always and forever.”

“You do?”

“Of course we do,” Robert Granger finally said as he walked over and picked the little girl up into his arms. “We won’t let you forget them, Little One,” he said softly as he gently rocked the still crying girl. “Never.”

“I’m being stupid, aren’t I?”

“No Clarice. You’re being quite normal under the circumstances. We understand. We all want you to be happy, but we know how hard this is for you and can understand if you feel sad now and again.”

“Thank you,” she whispered burying her head into Robert’s chest.

“So, are you ready to leave then?”

She nodded into his chest, afraid to let him go.

---

“A mini-van?” Harry asked as the Grangers stopped in the car park.

“Like it?” Hermione asked. “Daddy bought it earlier this week. Our other little car is too small for all of us so...”

“He didn’t have to do this for us,” Harry said.

“Nonsense, Harry. Daddy always does what’s best for the family. Right Daddy?”

“Spot on as usual, Princess,” Mr. Granger said. “Now go on and get strapped in. I’ll see to little Clarice here.”



After they all were strapped in, Harry watched out the window as the car turned onto the street and began driving through the streets of London. It was Harry's first time to see the city and he was enthralled by the sights. He had no idea where he really was and did not really care.

"Daddy," he heard Hermione say, "this isn't the way home."

"We're not going home, Sweetie," Mr. Granger said, "not directly."

"Where are we going?"

"Shopping."

"Shopping? For what?"

"Well Dear," Mrs. Granger said, "Harry and Clarice need new clothes. All they have is what they are wearing and that won't do at all."

"It's okay," Harry mumbled.

"No, it's not. You're going to get proper clothes. You can also pick your own bed linens, pajamas, bathrobe, towels and such." She said it in a voice that allowed for no real debate.

"I've never been shopping before," Harry said.

"You've never been?" Hermione asked.

"Nope."

"Now Hermione," Mrs. Granger said, "he's not some doll you can play dress up with."

"Mother," Hermione replied in exasperation.

"It's okay, Hermione," Harry said. "I won't mind if you help."

"You won't?"



“Nope.”

Hermione seemed to squeal with delight.

Saturday became a day of firsts for Harry. It was the first time he had ever been to a store of any size, much less one as large as the one the Grangers took him to. He had the first new clothes he could remember and they were his and not some of his overweight cousin's ratty hand-me-downs. He had his first pair of new trainers and first real pair of shoes. The Grangers actually bought him his first toys, some little airplanes. They were not planning to but decided to when Clarice seemed transfixed by a huge stuffed lion on a shelf that they bought hoping to put a smile on the girl's face. It worked. She named the lion “Leonard.”

After clothes shopping, the Grangers took him to a McDonalds, the first time he ever went there. It was in fact the first time he had ever been to anything like a restaurant. Then there was more shopping. Sheets, blankets, pillows, towels and other assorted items, again things Harry had either never had before or had never had such good ones before.

It had nearly been a case of sensory overload for Harry. It would have been but for Hermione. Except when he or she was in a changing room, she never left his side and actually made the day fun for Harry. True, she was a bit pushy about his clothes and he mostly bought what she picked out for him, but he had to admit that she seemed to know what she was doing. He knew he would not have picked as well had it been left up to him. During the car ride to his new home he thanked her for the wonderful day causing her to blush furiously, a reaction he was beginning to like a lot.

It was late in the afternoon when the new mini-van pulled off the motorway at Laughton in Essex. Harry, of course, had never been there before. He was thinking of asking Sensei if he had been there in the prior timeline, but for now he merely looked out the window as Hermione described the various sights. Before long, they turned onto a residential street called “Willow Way.”



“This is it Harry,” Hermione said. “This is my street!”

In Harry’s opinion, the houses here were huge. Certainly, they were both larger and older than any he had seen in Little Whinging. The lots were much larger as well and the plantings seemed older and far more varied. They soon turned onto a driveway and Hermione pointed to his new home. It was a very large, two story brick house. It looked like a mansion to Harry.

“You live here?” he asked.

Hermione nodded.

“It’s huge!”

“Don’t be silly, it’s not that big,” Hermione said.

“Bigger than the last house I lived in,” Harry said. “A lot bigger really.”

“Do you like it?”

Harry nodded.

“I’m glad. Now let me show you your room, Harry.”

She took his hand and practically dragged Harry towards the front door as Harry was still trying to comprehend the concept of his own room. He soon was following eagerly. They dashed in the front door and flew up the stairs so fast that Harry hardly saw any of the ground floor. They turned down a hall and she stopped at the first door on the right. She opened it and turned to Harry.

“Go on,” she said, “this is your room.”

The room was larger than any bedroom he remembered from Privet Drive. Against the wall where he had entered was a large bookcase. There was a bed in the corner with a night stand to one side and a large window looking out over the front yard. At the foot of the bed and against the wall was a trunk. Opposite from the bed there was a desk with a chair, a dresser and another door.



"Where's that door go?" Harry asked as he marveled at the room.

"Your closet, of course."

Harry walked up and opened the door to an empty closet.

"There's no bed in there?" he asked with some surprise.

"Why would one there be, Harry? That's where you hang your clothes."

"I slept in a small closet at my Aunt and Uncle's," Harry said meekly.

Hermione took his hand and squeezed it. "That's horrible, Harry," she said softly with tears in her voice. "But that's not what's gonna happen here. This is your room. That is your bed."

"It's," Harry choked, "it's a bit much."

"Nonsense. And if you must know this is the smallest bedroom in the house. Used to be mine, before..."

"Before what?"

"Before Mum and Dad agreed to take you and Clarice home with us. Clarice and I are across the hall. Want to see?"

"Can I?"

"Of course. Come on!"

SUNDAY, JUNE 5 1988 - 16 WILLOW WAY, LOUGHTON, ESSEX, U.K.

Harry had fallen asleep much earlier than usual for him the night before. He barely made it through the Star Trek episode without falling asleep on the couch in the living room. Mrs. Granger had mentioned something about it being a long day and how, given his past, he might have been a bit over stimulated as in having done and



seen far more than he was used to. Whatever the reason, Harry was asleep in his new bed practically as his head hit the pillow.

The problem with going to bed much earlier than usual was Harry awoke much earlier than usual. It was barely sunrise, about 5:00 in the morning and he was wide awake. He did not want to lie in bed anymore, even as comfortable bed as his was. He also did not want to wake anyone up. He found his way to the bathroom and showered and brushed his teeth before heading downstairs. When he reached the ground floor, out of habit he went straight to the kitchen. For years it had been his chore to cook breakfast for his relatives. He was looking through the pantry and refrigerator to get an idea as to what ingredients would be available when it struck him that, perhaps, it was not his job to cook for the Grangers.

It might not be his job, he thought, but it was something he actually enjoyed doing if for no other reason than since he began cooking almost three years ago, the Dursleys left him alone when he was at the stove or had a knife in his hand. He believed he was actually pretty good at it and wanted to say thank you to his new family for all they had done for him so far - and for his sister. He noted that the Grangers did not have any frozen breakfast, but they did have the basic ingredients for what he had in mind. He would just have to make it all from scratch. He found a step stool to reach the counter and all the burners on the stove, took a large knife and began cutting potatoes at the cutting board. Arguably, preparing the potatoes would take the longest.

By 7:30 he was cooking. In one frying pan he was cooking bacon. At the same time, he was making toast. Once the bacon was done, he began frying the potatoes in the bacon fat - something not particularly healthy, but quite tasty. Soon, there were five plates each set at the table, each with a stack of buttered toast as Harry turned to the rest of the meal followed by five more plates on the counter, each with a generous helping of potatoes and four strips of bacon. The pans were off the stove and soaking in water in the sink as Harry worked on the final element - stuffed omelets.



The stuffing had been a bit of a poser at first. Finally, he had noticed fresh strawberries and goat cheese in the fridge and an idea hit him. One day, he had made a similar omelet for himself at the Dursleys when they were out and it had been marvelous. A dozen eggs had already been whipped in a bowl, ready to hit the pan. A clean frying pan was heating on the stove with butter. The strawberries went into a blender, along with some orange juice and some sugar - not too much, Harry thought. You can always add more, but taking it out was too hard. He was going to create a puree, even though he did not know what that word meant. It was the whine of the blender as he made his stuffing that caused the others upstairs to begin to stir. It was the smells of the food that then got them to begin to wake up.

Hermione and Clarice were the first to make it down to the kitchen. By then, Harry had finished two of the omelets. One would be his, as he had tasted it to make sure it was what he wanted. He was working on a third one when the girls entered. Fortunately, Harry heard them coming.

"Harry! What are you doing?" Hermione asked.

"Cooking breakfast," Harry said watching the omelet on the stove.

"Why?"

"Cause I always do," Harry shrugged.

"But Mum doesn't ... Oh, Harry! She's gonna be upset."

"Why?"

"Cause you're too young to cook!"

"Been cooking since I was four," he replied.

"It's not allowed!"

"Well, I didn't know that, did I? Besides, I wanted to say thanks to your parents and this is what I know how to do."



“Still...”

Harry took the pan off the stove and plated the third omelet and then placed it back on the stove and poured in the eggs for a fourth one.

“What are you doing Harry?” Hermione hissed.

“Got two more to go,” Harry said. “Now please, don’t pester the cook!”

“I’m not pestering! I’m warning! Mum’s gonna be...”

“HERMIONE!” Mrs. Granger’s voice could be heard from upstairs. “I’ve told you NOT to cook!”

“Can’t be Hermione, Love,” Robert’s voice laughed. “Doesn’t smell like stuff’s on fire. It smells wonderful!”

“It’s not me, Mum,” Hermione called back. “It’s Harry!”

“Snitch,” Clarice laughed. “It does smell marvelous, Harry.”

“Naturally,” Harry said somewhat smugly as he plated the fourth omelet. The Grangers entered the kitchen as Harry began working on the final omelet.

“Harry?” Rose asked. “What are you doing?”

“Making breakfast,” Harry replied without taking his eyes off the last omelet.

“Why?”

“Cause I always do - or did. Ever since I was four. My Aunt taught me the basics, but I’ve read and studied and figured out a bit on my own.”

The Grangers gasped.

“You don’t have to, you know,” Robert said.



“Wanted to,” Harry replied. “Woke up early and wanted to say ‘thank you.’ I like cooking. It was the only chore my relatives made me do that I liked, I guess because I’m good at it and they left me alone when I was cooking.”

“Ask permission next time,” Rose said.

“I will.”

“So,” Robert said as he took a deep sniff. “What’s on the menu?”

“Toast, bacon, breakfast potatoes and stuffed omelets,” Harry said.

“Stuffed with what?”

“A strawberry sauce and goat cheese filling,” Harry replied. “Quite tasty.”

“I don’t remember having any of that in the pantry,” Rose said.

“You have the ingredients.”

“You mean you made this from scratch?”

Harry nodded as he added the filling to the last omelet. “Whole potatoes,” he said, “fresh strawberries, eggs, butter, bacon, goat cheese and a bunch of other useful stuff. Coffee’s done brewing,” he added as he began the finishing touches. “Oh, I do have left over strawberry sauce in case you want something on your toast other than butter.” The pan came off the stove and the last omelet slid onto its plate. Harry then turned off the burner, gave the pan a rinse in the sink and placed it to soak. He then began to do something with the red sauce he had made. The others watched as he seemed to use a spoon to put some on the plate. Once done, he began to carry the plates to the table.

“I don’t like eggs,” Hermione said with disgust in her voice as Harry placed a plate in front of her.

“Me neither,” Clarice moped.



"Try it?" Harry said, a little hurt.

"NO!" they said in unison.

Harry watched as the two adults did try it.

"Oh my God," Rose said. "This is amazing!" Harry could tell by the expression on her face she was not humoring him.

"Mmmmm!" Robert added. "Tastes like cheese cake! You girls should give it a try."

They shook their heads in protest.

"Harry spent a lot of time on this and it's wonderful," Rose said. "Just give it a try, please?"

Harry moved next to Hermione and cut a piece of her omelet. "Please?" he asked. "You can close your eyes if you wish. Please?"

Reluctantly, Hermione complied. Carefully, Harry placed the fork in her mouth with a piece of his omelet on it. She closed her mouth and for a moment looked like she wanted to gag, but then... a huge smile formed on her face. "It's wonderful," she said softly. "It's amazing! Clarice, you do need to try it!"

Clarice did, tentatively at first. As soon as she found the stuffing, she smiled and began to devour her omelet. It seemed the breakfast disappeared in minutes.

"Can you teach me this?" Rose asked.

Harry was taken aback. No one had ever asked him something like that before, and most certainly not an adult.

"Sure," he said, "if you want."

"I hated eggs," Hermione said. "Not Harry's though. Can you make anything taste good Harry?"



"Try me," Harry said.

"Liver?"

"Eeeww!" Clarice complained. "That's just nasty!"

"Can be," Harry agreed. "Most people over cook it. Easy to do - make it nasty that is. Over cooked, it's like eating rubber. You have to pay attention. But done right, it's like eating buttered meat. Really nummy. Cooked right with onions - of course - and a decent sauce ... better than a steak really. I'd love a chance to try it with a red wine reduction. Read about that, but never had a chance. My relatives always bought super sweet wines and that's not what any decent chef would use. They call for dry red wine."

"Merlot?" Rose asked.

"Yeah, I guess. Something like that."

"Want to give it a try tonight, Harry?"

"Sure!"

"Liver tonight," Rose announced.

"Eeeww!" the girls wailed.

---

Harry and Rose returned from the market just around lunch time. Harry had what he thought he needed for what he was now calling "Every Child's Most Hated Meal Finally Done Right." Rose agreed to do the dessert. Harry conceded he was terrible at that. As they walked into the house, Minerva McGonogall arrived.

"Been shopping?" Minerva asked.



“Harry’s gonna teach me some cooking tips and I am going to teach him some baking tips for dinner.”

“Cooking tips?”

“You should have been here for breakfast, Minerva. Harry made it from scratch. It was amazing. Got my daughter and Clarice to eat eggs, he did. If his dinner is half as good, he could open his own restaurant someday!”

“So,” McGonagall said suspiciously, “what’s on tonight’s menu then?”

“Liver, asparagus and potatoes,” Harry said. “And a salad. You want to try?”

“It might be worth it,” Rose added.

“Erm, I guess,” McGonagall said.

“We have enough, Harry?”

“Seem to,” he said. “I was planning to pre-cut the liver anyway so I suppose I can - er - make it work for six.”

“We got time before we have to get started?”

“Few hours. Depends on when you want to eat.”

“Seven?”

“Plenty of time then. We should begin prepping at four but can wait until five. If we begin at four, I can take you through the thing. At five, I’ve gotta bust ass - sorry - to get it done.”

“We’ll shoot for four then,” Rose said. “Can Hermione and Clarice watch or help?”

“If they want to,” Harry said.



Cooking lessons from a seven year old, McGonagall thought, he must be good. "Can I watch?"

"Don't pester the cook and you can," Harry said.

"I won't."

"And stay out of my way too!"

"I will."

"Then you can," Harry finished.

"You don't have to begin now, do you?"

"Few hours."

"Then, if everyone is here, I guess it's time for this weeks lesson?"

Rose gathered up Hermione, Clarice and Robert and they all soon had seats in the living room as Sensei appeared. He checked on the homework he had assigned each of the children and announced he was pleased with their progress and assigned them one more exercise for the upcoming week. He then turned to McGonagall and said: "So, and how was your week?"

"Very interesting," McGonagall replied. She pulled a few sheets of parchment from her bag and began glancing through them. She then pulled out three letters and handed one to each of the children. "First of all, by fortuitous circumstance I was able to meet with Professor Hirayuki Genda, the Dean of Admissions for the Watanabe School. Those letters are your acceptance letters for this summer's term beginning June 30th. Gringotts is expediting the passport applications for Clarice and Harry. The tuition is pre-paid for all three of you. Once you receive your passports, you will also receive your plane tickets to and from Japan. You will fly out on June 28th and return on July 30th.

"I also looked into Harry and Clarice's financial situation. I have a complete ledger of their estates with me. Each has a trust fund for



their education and other expenses valued at over twenty-million pounds...”

“Bloody hell,” Robert exclaimed. “That’s their trust fund?”

McGonagall nodded. “It apparently has been very well managed, as had the estates they will attain upon their majority. The trust represents less than five percent of the value of their entire estates. The total estimated value of each of their estates is around six hundred million.”

“Bugger!”

“Robert!” Rose scolded.

“Sorry. It’s just that...”

“Yeah,” Rose agreed.

“Is that a lot?” Harry asked.

“Let’s put it this way, Harry,” Robert said. “You two are easily among the richest people in Britain.”

“Wow!”

“Just don’t go on any spending sprees,” Rose added.

“There were some irregularities,” McGonagall said. “First off, it appears that the Dursleys were robbing Harry blind.”

“What?” Harry asked.

“How?” Robert added.

“Dumbledore gave them limited access to Harry’s trust to pay for Harry’s upkeep, health, education and the like. He also provided Harry’s Uncle with one of the Potter properties outside of London. Vernon Dursley’s sister has been living there rent free since 1982. It



seems Harry's Uncle withdrew the maximum amount from Harry's trust each year - a total of over three hundred thousand pounds."

"I never saw a penny!" Harry protested. "All my clothes were my Cousin's cast offs! The only reason I got glasses was the school required it and my Uncle was furious at having to spend that money!"

"We know, Harry," McGonagall said in as soothing a voice as she could muster. "Gringotts has a non-magical solicitor's firm on retainer to deal with these kinds of problems. They will file suit against the Dursley estate and initiate eviction proceedings against the remaining Dursley. Both cases will be brought by the Potter Foundation, which does exist. The Foundation provides tuition assistance to the vast majority of the Muggle Born students who attend magical schools in Britain and is technically the sole beneficiary of the Potter Estate should there be no Potters left."

"In other words," Sensei said, "no one will catch wind that Harry and Clarice are alive?"

"That is the idea," McGonagall agreed. "Next, you should know that Harry and Clarice have property. The Potters maintained a residence in London - a large house just across from Hyde Park. There's also Potter Manor in Devonshire. There's a large house at St. Andrews in Scotland - apparently one of Harry's ancestors was a golf fanatic and when Harry and Clarice are older, they have membership."

"I've died and gone to heaven," Robert said.

"Robert plays and has been dying to play the Old Course," Rose explained.

"In addition, there's a place in Paris, a Villa at Cannes and another Villa on the Mediterranean Coast of Italy."

"Bugger me!" Robert exclaimed.

"ROBERT! CHILDREN!" Rose shot.



“Sorry Dear, but I was not expecting this at all. Harry? Clarice? You should know we knew nothing about this at all. We took you in because you both need a home, not because of your money and we don’t want you to think you owe us anything at all. Although, if you want to, we can consider spending holidays at some of these places.”

“I’d like that,” Harry said. “My Aunt and Uncle never took me anywhere.”

Clarice merely nodded.

“And the amounts are not the worst of it,” McGonagall said.

“How so?” Robert asked.

“Between Gringotts investments and their combined investment properties both residential and commercial, their estates are each expected to earn about sixty million this year alone.”

“Ten percent?”

“Or better. Most of the Ancient and Noble House Potter lands, which includes VERY expensive properties in London’s financial district have been in the family for a thousand years or more. No mortgages. True, the estate does have to pay taxes, but the rents more than make up for it. Truth be told, their land holdings are worth more than those of the Muggle Queen, and make a profit to boot. The account managers have done an admirable job with the estate. Then again, a good year for the Potter Estate is a good year for the Gringotts goblins and goblins are a profit driven race of beings.”

“I don’t understand any of this,” Harry complain.

“Harry,” Sensei said, “one day you will. Remember what I told you. You cannot learn everything in one day. Much of this will take time. Just listen and learn what you can from it and more will make sense later. More important, you don’t have to learn this all today. My coming back so early means I don’t have to force feed you this. You will have time to learn and to understand before you have to do anything much with this knowledge.”



"You and your sister are quite wealthy. The Potters always were. But they also gave back. Through the Foundation, they've spent billions over the centuries to educate Muggle Borns and promote harmony between the magical and non-magical worlds and more. In my timeline, I would eventually use those billions in the near futile hope of either preserving the memory of the human race or sending me back to prevent the end of the world. That is what one should do with such wealth. Pick a cause. Don't rely on governments to fix the present or future."

"Ancient and Noble House," Hermione asked, "what's that?"

"Sir Galard Potter was a Wizard Warrior who sat at King Arthur's Round Table. He never made it into the Arthurian Legend because his line did not die out and made sure it was kept out of the histories. But he was one of the Arthurian Knights. His Great-great grandson Sylvester was head of the first true Britannia Council of Magic, the ancient forerunner to the current magical government of Britannia - today's Britain and Ireland. 500 heads of families formed that ancient council. Of those five hundred, only twenty-three still hold the title of Ancient and Noble House - those who had male descendants of the same name down through the nearly twelve hundred years. All the others died out in time or lost their titles under our law. When he's older, Harry will be Lord Potter - a title few in our world can claim and he shall be entitled to a hereditary seat in our legislature and on our court."

"And what of Clarice?" Hermione asked. "She's a noble too, right?"

"My Hermione always said we were centuries behind our non-magical kin in regards to the women in our world: centuries ahead in terms of education, but centuries behind in all other respects. Daughters of magical parents are still sold or offered into arranged marriages. Women can only arise to our Wizengamot - our legislature and courts of law - because there are no men left in their family line to hold the office or they are appointed proxy. The most gifted person I knew in my life was my Hermione and she was held back by her gender - and by the fact that all thought she was Muggle Born. That too is



politically a second class person in magical society even though there really can be no rational basis for either distinction.”

“So I am not noble,” Clarice said.

“You should be,” Hermione said.

“But she’s not,” Sensei finished. “Were it not for the Potter Will that gave her half the Estate, Harry would have received it all.”

“Might explain why they’re both so bloody rich,” Rose huffed. “Prima Genitor!”

“What’s that?” Hermione asked.

“Very old law,” Rose said. “Only the oldest son inherits anything.”

“Oh. Doesn’t seem fair if you ask me.”

“Never was,” Rose agreed.

“One day,” Sensei said, “I hope you three will be able to change that.”

“Anything else on their finances they need to know?” Robert asked.

“There are thirty magical residential properties with tenants who have failed to pay rent since the last Lord Potter was murdered. But, there’s nothing we can do about those Death Eater dead beats and their supporters now.”

“Why not?”

“Only Lord Potter can ask for the rents or order their eviction. Harry and Clarice’s father never took title. He either too busy fighting a war or was in hiding. Harry cannot claim the title for some years yet. Eleven at the earliest. Besides, to claim title he must admit he lives to our world...

“Which will invite the machinations of the Old Man who stuck him with the Dursleys in the first place,” Sensei finished. “No, best not go there



now.” The tone he used indicated this topic was closed for the time being. “And what of Sirius?”

“Sirius?” Harry asked.

“Your’s and Clarice’s godfather,” Sensei said. “The one who should have seen to you when your parents were killed had he not been locked away in prison for a crime he did not commit.”

“Oh yeah.”

“You were right about the rat,” McGonagall said. “It was Pettigrew, the real criminal. He gave a full confession and was arrested Monday. He’s been sentenced to life without parole. It seems Millicent Bagnold, our Minister for Magic had already reopen Sirius’s case just recently. As a result of the confession, Sirius was transferred to St. Mungo’s Hospital for rest and rehabilitation and such. Couple of months and he should be a free man again. He’s been exonerated of any criminal activity.”

“That’s wonderful,” Sensei said.

“He wants to see Harry and Clarice.”

“He won’t try and take them from us, will he?” Hermione asked.

“I’m pretty sure he realizes that would not be in Harry and Clarice’s best interests. Besides, legally he cannot. I was named your magical guardian while he was still in prison. As I was one of the designated alternates under the Potter Will, he cannot force me to turn you over to him. But he wants to become part of Harry and Clarice’s lives and I do agree that could be a good thing.”

“Why?” Rose asked.

“He’s a wizard. He’s wealthy enough he does not have to work. I cannot be with you all the time and there will be times that the children may have to enter the magical world. Sirius could act as their guide and minder when they do. Moreover, with Sirius helping them, I can more or less return to my previous schedule. While Dumbledore



may have no memory of Harry and Clarice, if I were to spend too much time away from Hogwarts during the school year, he might become suspicious.”

“I think we should meet him,” Harry said.

“Why?” Hermione asked.

Harry shrugged. “He was close to my parents. I’d like to get to know him a bit I guess.”

“Next Saturday perhaps?” McGonagall suggested. “I could take you to St. Mungos.”

“That sounds like an idea,” Robert said cautiously.

“Well,” Sensei added, “if your venturing into the magical world so soon, might I recommend swinging ‘round Diagon Alley? There some books I’d like you to get for the children.”

It was agreed that they would do that following their visit to Sirius.



## CHAPTER TWENTY: DEVELOPMENTS

MONDAY, JUNE 6, 1988 - THAMES HOUSE, LONDON, U.K.

A century or more ago, Thames House had been a palace. It still stood, located on the banks of the Thames River in the Westminster section of London not far from Whitehall and Parliament in the geographic center of the now all but extinct political center of the former British Empire. It was once said the sun never set on the Empire. Geographically, that had been true. Historically, it had proven false.

By the First World War, the former palace had become a government office building, a center of military intelligence both to spy on the Germans and to try and stop them from spying on Britain. Those two functions were commonly known as MI-5 and MI-6. MI-6, also known as the Secret Intelligence Service focused on gathering intelligence on other countries and most of its operations were located overseas and run locally from the various British Embassies throughout the world, although the analysis of the information was done in its offices in London. MI-6 became a part of pop culture through the fictional books of one of its former operatives Ian Fleming and the movies made about his fictional agent James Bond.

The Security Service known as MI-5 was less well known. It was originally formed to find enemy spies and agents, a function that only increased after the end of the Second World War and later the defections of pro-Soviet British intelligence agents to the Soviet Union in the 1950's. The real expansion began later. With the troubles in Northern Ireland, MI-5 took on the additional role of counter-terrorism in Britain. It's mission was internal security - to protect Her Majesty's government and people from internal security threats. It did have overseas offices and operations, mostly to keep tabs on potential threats to internal national security.

MI-6 answered to both the Defense Minister and the Foreign Secretary and, as all Ministry offices, ultimately the Prime Minister and by constitution, Her Majesty. MI-5 also answered to the Minister of Defense, although for the most part it's main boss was the Home Secretary. In many ways, the two offices were extremely similar. Only



their regional focus was different. Over the years, MI-5 had expanded. Within a year or two, Thames House would be strictly MI-5 as the other government offices were being moved out to make room.

Within MI-5 there was an office that only the head of the Security Service and a handful of other knew about. It was called Office W. Excluding support staff, there were thirty agents assigned to that office, although at least a third were posted overseas at any one time.

Roger Grant had been with Office W since he finished Oxford. Lacking political connections - being the son of a coal miner - he had risen through the office over his twenty-five years of service through talent. He now headed the office. He knew he probably would rise no further. Within Office W, he had no equal in terms of experience or talent. His problem was he did not suffer fools regardless of who they might be. There was only so far one could rise in any bureaucracy on skill, intelligence and talent alone. At some point, political savvy became a skill necessary for further promotion. Grant neither had it nor wanted it as he was happy where he was, head of Office W.

Like every other "office" within MI-5, Office W was formed to evaluate certain threats to the internal security of Great Britain. However, the specific potential threat it was tasked to evaluate and, if necessary counter, was a closely held secret. Office W was tasked with monitoring the very secret magical world in Britain. It was formed over a decade before the Second World War when what became MI-6 began to learn that there was a seemingly parallel society in Europe made up of honest to God witches and wizards and that there was an ongoing war in Europe for control of the magical society. MI-5 was to find, infiltrate and monitor any similar societies in Britain.

For the most part, Magical Britain managed to stay out of the Great European Magical War that began in 1929 and lasted until 1945. MI-5 was aware of efforts to export that war across the channel, but were as creative in stopping that as its non-magical counterpart would be in stopping German Espionage during World War II - in other words, MI-5 was extremely good at its job. They remained very effective at keeping tabs on their magical countrymen, far more effective than any of the magicals could possibly imagine. Roger Grant liked to think



that if a witch or wizard of interest to Her Majesty's Intelligence Service farted, he would know about it.

Not too long ago, a civil war had erupted in magical Britain. The revolutionaries were little more than terrorists or thugs but the intel analysis on that movement made their defeat a top priority for Her Majesty's Government. The terrorists were led by a megalomaniac who called himself Lord Voldemort and was potentially as great a threat to Britain as the Nazi's were and later the Soviets.

By 1975, it was clear that the war would not remain contained to the magical world and the Intelligence Services acted. They picked a side, that of the legitimate government of the magical world and engaged in a series of "Black Ops" designed to hunt down and eradicate the followers and supporters of Voldemort. Unlike their magical counterparts, after years of dealing with the IRA terrorists, killing terrorists did not make them squeamish. By their own estimate, ninety-percent of the so called Death Eaters who got their wish and died were victims of MI-5 and supporting combat teams from the British Army, mostly the Special Air Service. They accounted for almost half of the enemy's Order of Battle, yet despite the losses the enemy seemed poised for victory until the War abruptly ended. To MI-5, the end of the war was a surprise both in that it happened and how it happened. Office W, however, was not so surprised. The first rule each new Office W Agent was taught is that the magical world only makes sense once you understand it makes no sense whatsoever.

At the height of that war, Office W was three times its current size. Since their role was now limited to intelligence gathering and not field operations, many of its Agents had been reassigned. Most of those who remained would never be assigned to another office as most of the thirty agents were magical, people who had joined the non-magical world and government in disgust at their own society. Things today were quiet. One of their biggest missions these days was to try and get a firm estimate on the size of magical Britain and to build dossiers on as many magicals as they could so that should things go pear shaped again in that world, Her Majesty's Government would be able to respond swiftly to protect the vast majority of the population.



The current estimate was that there were between sixty and seventy-five thousand witches and wizards in the British Isles.

Roger Grant was forty-seven, had a wife and four children, the oldest two were in university. He had joined Office W in 1963. He was not magical, but his wife was as were two of his four children. As an Agent, he had conducted investigations and had run spies into the magical world. His contacts included none other than the current Minister for Magic as well as a highly placed spy who had once been in Voldemort's inner circle. During the war, he had led and planned field operations against Voldemort. At least forty-seven Death Eaters were buried in unmarked graves as a result of those ops. Grant never lost sleep over that. He had seen what those sadistic bastards could do. With the war over, his role and that of his office was to maintain its contacts and simply monitor the goings on in magical Britain.

A buzzer went off on his desk.

"Yes Vi?" he asked into the intercom.

"Agents Evans and Greengrass are here for the ten o'clock Boss," a woman's voice replied.

"Send them in."

Two men entered. One was clearly older than the other. The older, grey haired man was Michael Evans. He was the same age as Grant but had joined MI-5 five years later. Like Grant, Evans was non-magical. With him was a thirty-one year old man with dark hair and eyes. His name was David Greengrass, a magical who had joined MI-5 Office W eleven years ago during the war. Each man carried a bulging file folder and they took seats across the desk from Grant.

"The Potter case?" Grant asked. The two men nodded. Grant sighed. "By the looks of those files you lot's finally found something tangible?" The men nodded. "Since '81 we've been looking for proof that this supposed boy-hero exists. Every time we hear a report, we've tried to run it to ground. Until now nothing. You're telling me that's changed?" The two men nodded. "How?"



“Best we can say is some dam has burst,” Evans said.

“What do you mean?”

“Working on that,” Greengrass added. “Really can’t say for sure. Best guess from magical is that there was some right powerful and unknown protective magic on the boy. It broke.”

Grant knew better than to ask what kind of magic. If Greengrass knew, he would have said.

“Define broke,” Grant said.

“Monday after the story broke about the death of Potter in the Wizinging Press, I went to the ministry requesting any documents they had on the lad.”

“And unlike before it was not a red tape run around?”

“On the contrary,” Greengrass said. “We can begin with this,” he added handing Grant a parchment. “Potter’s Magical Birth Certificate. It’s still technically classified ‘Most Secret per CWW’ yet they handed it over as if it was not big deal. Technically, that’s treason.”

“CWW?”

“Chief Warlock of the Wizengamot,” Greengrass said. “De facto head of the magical courts and legislature Albus Dumbledore, also Headmaster of Hogwarts school and a bunch of other things. All Potter documents are classified ‘Most Secret’ and, with the exception of bank records which are governed by the magical banking secrecy laws, they handed them over without any questions or hassle.”

“Odd that,” Grant commented.

“Odder,” Greengrass agreed. “Talk to Joe Wizard on the street today and they’ve never heard of Harry Potter. Remind them of the Boy-Who-Lived and they will recall for the moment. Ask them again five minutes later and they will have forgotten everything again. It’s as if the magic that kept his reality a secret for all these years vanished



only to be replaced by more powerful magic that erased his existence from memory. Aside from those articles in the magical dailies from the 28th, there's no mention of him in the press at all. Biggest news event since the end of the War and no one remembers or cares."

"So he's dead?"

"No. There's no death certificate in the ministry records. I know. I looked."

"Maybe they just didn't show them?"

"No Sir, they did. Moreover, the wall of magic cannot be faked. We have known Harry James Potter was born July 31st, 1980 because the wall reflects all magical births. The wall also records all magical deaths. It's automatic and cannot be hidden from the public That's why there were rumors of a sister. Clarice Lillian Potter was born July 12th 1981. The wall won't tell you where or to whom and Potter is not an uncommon name, still..."

"It records deaths?"

Greengrass nodded.

"And I take it Potter's not on the death side of the ledger?"

Another nod.

"And there's no Death Certificate filed despite the press articles?"

Another nod.

"Are you saying he's alive?"

"He is," Evans said. "We'll get to that bit after."

"After what?"

"Dave completes the magical side brief, Sir."



“Fine.”

“Harry James Potter,” Dave Greengrass said, “was born July 31st, 1980 in the Village of Godrics Hollow.”

“Never heard of it.”

“It’s a mixed village northeast of Essex,” Greengrass said. “In the last respective censuses, 275 non-magicals and 210 magicals. Of course, that was before the War ended and the numbers may be different today.”

“Of course,” Grant said.

“His mother was a witch born to non-magical parents. Her name was Lily Marie Evans. She was born January 30th, 1960 in London to Peter Evans, then forty-five and the former Marsha Banks, then twenty-seven. She was the younger of two daughters by that marriage.”

“That marriage?”

“Marsha’s first. Peter’s second. He was a widower.”

“Really?”

“Yes,” Mike Evans said. “Peter Evans was my father by his first marriage. I was born in ‘41. Dad was flying Spits in the RAF at the time. I had a younger brother and sister - twins born in ‘43. In late ‘44 I was visiting my gran in Surrey and my younger brother and sister were in London at home with Mum. It was one of the first V-2 raids. Direct hit on my home. No survivors. Dad was still off at war fighting over Italy at the time and remained in the RAF for years after and I was raised by my Gran. I knew of my half sister, met her only a few times and her older sis too. Haven’t seen either since ‘78. Seems my estranged relations are relevant to this inquiry, much to my surprise.”

“So Potter is your?” Grant began.

“Nephew, I guess,” Mike Evans finished. “Bit of a shock really.”



"Lily Evans was Hogwarts Class of '78," Greengrass continued. "Head Girl, to be exact. She married the head boy from her year, one James Tiberius Potter, born March 27th, 1960 on July 22nd, 1978."

"They were only eighteen?" Grant asked.

Greengrass shrugged. "There was a war on. Lots of folks married young for fear of not marrying at all."

"I see. Continue."

"The two joined the Order of the Phoenix right out of school and they both entered Auror training. Lily resigned from the Auror Corps in December of '79 'cause she was pregnant. James was suspended in May of 1980 for going A.W.O.L. and charged with desertion in September of that year..."

"Why?"

"Records are not clear on that. Word on the magical street was they had been sent into hiding by Dumbledore. No one knows why, but he never intervened in the criminal charge. Maybe they just wanted to have a real life? Many did back then. Hell, that's why I'm MI-5! Bloody Aurors were not allowed to really fight back against the bastards. We were!

"Anyway, the records support the legend to some point. As Auror trainees, the Potters fought Voldemort in person three times between July of '78 and December of '79 and lived to tell the tale for a time. Only one other couple was that - er - fortunate. Harry Potter's parents were killed on October 31st, 1981 at their 'Safe House': 328 High Street, Godrics Hollow. Voldemort offed them himself. Tried to kill Harry, if the legend is true, but disappeared without a trace. Until the magical world forgot about it all a little over a week ago, there was a rumor that Harry had a younger sister. It's true. Clarice Lillian Potter was born July 12th of '81."

"Her status?"



"Alive as well," Michael Evans said. "Seems I have a niece as well."

"I see," Grant said. "Go on."

"Odd thing was," Greengrass said, "where the Potters were killed really. James Potter was the 33rd Earl of Godricston. When his father was murdered by Death Eaters in '78, he became Lord Potter and took over the estates, the largest landed estates in Britain short of the Royal Household itself. Estimate value of their lands is close to a billion. Yet the Safe House was not Potter property. The Potter properties were far better protected. Yet they went there instead."

"The dumb questions now being why and whose property was it?" Grant asked.

"The dumb answers being no one knows why and the property was an unguarded home belonging to one Albus Dumbledore."

"Sounds like a set up to me."

"Indeed it does. Problem is we can't prove it."

"Now, we also checked the local non-magical records. 328 High Street caught fire on October 31st, 1981. The local fire brigade responded. Two bodies were removed from the ruins: a man and a woman. Locals told authorities there were also two babies known to be living there, but no such remains were found."

"So," Grant said. "Seems this Potter is real. He survived the attack in '81. Do we know for certain if he's still alive? If so, where is he and where's he been all this time?"

"The answers to your questions, Sir," Evans began, "is yes, he is still alive. We know where he is and where he's been."

"And," Greengrass added, "the magicals have no clue."

"Tell me," Grant said.



“As you know,” Evans said, “this particular inquiry began with the May 28th articles in the magical papers. The articles said that Potter died in a non-magical house fire on or about May 25th which was the result of a gas leak. Two adults also perished in the blaze. We’ve identified the fire in question as there was only one meeting those parameters within a two day window either side of the 25th. By only one, I mean only one in all of Britain and Ireland.”

“Where was it?”

“Number 4 Privet Drive, Little Whinging, Surrey.”

“Any reason to believe magic was used?”

“No Sir,” Greengrass said. “True, gas fires are the magicals typical explanation for such things, but not in this case.”

“How so?”

“The obliviator Squad was never called in, according to our magical law enforcement contacts. Moreover, the Fire Investigator has evidence that the gas lines in the entire area were corroded. Combination of contaminated gas and substandard materials, they say. To date, 267 homes and business in the area are in need of refurbishment. Seems Number 4 was the first to blow, but others were on the verge.”

“So it’s rotten luck?”

The two agents nodded.

“Metro forensics has identified the remains of the three vics,” Evans said handing Grant three photographs. All three looked like police arrest photos.

“The man was Vernon Rubin Dursley, age thirty-eight. He was a senior accounts manager at Grunnings, a factory that makes specialty drill equipment. The woman was Petunia Ethel Dursley, age thirty. She was not employed outside the home. The boy was their



son Dudley Wayne Dursley, age seven. Kid has a juvie record. Basically he was a notorious bully and hooligan.”

“These police blotter pics?”

Evans nodded. “The Dursleys were on holiday in the Bahamas. They left May 6th. On May 17th, felony warrants were issued for the arrest of the adults. Metro knew they had left the country and the warrants were faxed to our embassy in Nassau. The information was turned over to the Bahamas authorities and the Dursleys were deported on May 22nd. They were arrested in customs at Heathrow and posted bond.”

“For what?”

“Aggravated assault on a minor, child abuse and neglect and attempted murder of a minor. Had they lived, they would also have been charged with filing a false missing persons report. While in the Bahamas they reported that their nephew had gone missing.”

“Let me guess. Harry Potter?”

Evans nodded. “Petunia Dursley’s maiden name was Evans. She was Lily Evans Potter’s older sister - my other half sister. Piece of work, that one.”

“Metro thinks the husband was the primary perp. There are medical records indicating that the wife was a victim of physical abuse as well.”

“Still!”

Evans nodded.

“And the boy was not with them?”

“No Sir. There was no record of the boy leaving the country.”

Grant nodded. “So what’s become of him?”



“Now the plot thickens,” Evans said. “He was left behind and ordered not to attend school. He attends primary school in Little Whinging. His teachers describe him as their brightest student but he’s a bit shy and quiet. He’s also a regular at the local public library although there is no evidence that he either has a library card or ever checked out a book. According to the library staff, he goes there to read.

“May 7th, the day after the Dursleys abandoned him for fun in the Bahamas sun, he spent several hours at the library. He left around four thirty or so. According to eye witnesses, while crossing the street in front of the library he collapsed. A family from Essex who were out sight seeing stopped to render assistance. The husband and wife are both Dentists and know first aid. Their eight year old daughter rang emergency services. The family’s name is Granger.

“Potter was rushed to local trauma. He had slipped into a coma by the time he arrived. His condition was critical and he was air lifted to St. Bartholomew’s in London which is considered better at his kind of cases. He underwent emergency surgery to stabilize his condition. He was then placed in a medically induced coma for about a week as four additional procedures were performed to repair damage. He has since had two other minor procedures.”

“What was wrong with him?” Grant asked.

“Left arm broken in two places, both compound fractures. Several broken ribs. Internal bleeding and injuries to include a punctured lung. His back was covered with scars and fresh lacerations consistent with repeated whippings. The lacerations had become infected and he was running a very high fever. It also appears that his left leg had been mauled by a dog or some other animal. He was also suffering from acute malnutrition. We interviewed the attending physicians and they agree that it’s a miracle he’s alive. They said it was the worst case of child abuse they had seen that did not involve a corpse.

“At the time, he had no identification. Officially, he was admitted as a John Doe. He was also discharged as one as well, even though by then his true identity was known to authorities.”

“Discharged? When?”



"Saturday. Anyway, despite his John Doe status, Social Services took over his case. An emergency petition for foster care was filed with the court and granted ex parte on May 10th. Metro assigned Detective-Sergeant Gail Nelson to investigate the criminal aspects of his case. By then, a couple had already volunteered to take him on as a foster child."

"Who?"

"The Grangers. The family that had found them. Seems social services already had a file on them as they had adopted their daughter. Their request was fast tracked and they were approved in record time."

"What about these Grangers? Any intel on them?"

Evans nodded handing his boss two files. "The husband is Robert Aaron Granger, born in London March 31, 1943. Went to Public Boarding School then college, Sandhurst, before being commissioned in the Army. Served in the Paras to begin but spent most of his ten years service in the S.A.S. You might have met him, Boss."

"Don't recall."

"He was a Captain with Two-Two S.A.S. in '75. His unit was in on your Oxford raid."

"Small world," Grant said.

"He left the Army not long afterwards. Went to Dental School where he met his wife. They have a practice here in London and live at Number 16 Willow Way, Loughton, Essex."

"The woman is Rose Marie Halloway. She was born October 4th, 1952 in Birmingham. Went to college and then Dental school. The Grangers married in 1977. She had an accident while riding a horse in '69. Suffered severe internal injuries and, among other things, had



to have a hysterectomy. Consequently, the Grangers cannot have children of their own.

"They adopted their daughter on September 23rd, 1979 - a Sunday."

"M-Forgery?"

"Obviously," Greegrass said. "According to her Birth Certificate and adoption records, Hermione Jean Granger was born September 19th, 1979 at Hogwarts Hospital."

"I thought that was a magic school."

"It is, Sir. Her birth parents were David Puckle and Erin Ryan, both sixteen at the time and both students at the school. Puckle was a Muggle Born. Ryan was not. They married about two years later, joined the Auror Corps and the Order of the Phoenix. They were murdered by Death Eaters on October 4th, 1981."

"This all seems unusually coincidental, don't you think?" Grant said.

Evans nodded and continued. "The Granger girl attends St. Michaels school here in London. Said to be at the top of her class."

"Two bright ones then?"

Evans nodded. "Hermione started a year early. Harry is so far ahead in his class work he's likely to skip his next year altogether. And there's more," he added pushing a photograph to his boss.

Grant could see five people in the photo. Two were adults and the other three children. "Grangers?" he asked.

"The adults and the girl with the curly hair," Evans replied. "The boy holding her hand it Potter."

"Who's the smaller girl holding Potter's other hand?"

"Her name is Clarice Jameson. She's the Granger's newer foster child."



“Newer?”

Evans nodded. “She was adopted as a baby.”

“Let me guess, birth certificate and adoption papers are M-Forges?”

“Birth certificate is, the adoption papers are legit,” Greengrass said.

“Anyway,” Evans continued, “her adoptive father died from cancer early last year. Her adoptive Mum was a school teacher. On May 23rd, they were driving to school when their car was broadsided by a lorry. Mum was dead at the scene. The girl was injured and sent to St. Bart’s. Social Services did something out of character and looked into her background. It turns out, she was born Clarice Lillian Potter on June 12th, 1980. She’s the second Potter!”

“And now we have three magicals living with the Grangers?”

Evans nodded.

“And the Grangers?”

“Legit,” Greengrass added. “Non-magical.”

“Do they know what they have?”

The two agents shrugged.

“I think we need to keep an eye on them,” Grant finished, telling his agents what they already knew.



## CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE:

### INTO THE MAGICAL WORLD

The Grangers were unaware of the attention being paid to them by Office W of MI-5. For the Granger household, it was a time of adjustment as they had suddenly gone from a family of three to a family of five. For the most part, all of them adjusted fairly easily.

Harry was a little overwhelmed by so much, most notably being treated as a human being and an equal and not as a slave or animal. A cross word still made him flinch, but he was learning that the cross word or yelling did not mean pain in this new life. Fortunately for Harry, the yelling had mostly to do with bathrooms, as in some one was taking too bloody long when someone else was in need. The other times voices would be raised was usually in the morning as, while she loved school, Hermione was not a morning person and had to be all but dragged out the door. One of the Grangers almost always had to tell him sternly to go to bed. He usually spend most of his time with Hermione and Clarice and easily lost track of time with them.

The new routine began Monday morning after they left the hospital. Harry and Clarice would be remaining at home and would spend the morning working on their school work while Mrs. Granger, who had taken time off from work, helped them when asked but otherwise kept them company as they both worked away. Harry finished his course work for the year within a few days of arriving and spent the rest of the time sitting with Clarice reading as she did her school work or helping when she asked. Late one night, Rose confessed to her husband that Harry had the makings of a wonderful teacher one day. Even though she knew more, Harry was better at explaining things to Clarice than she was.

Mr. Granger would take Hermione to school on his way to work and, because Hermione actually had to go to school, she was allowed first bathroom privileges. Harry and Clarice quickly worked out an arrangement as to which of them was last because invariably there would be an issue with the hot water for the last one.



Every other afternoon, Mrs. Granger took Harry and Clarice for their physical therapy at a clinic not far from the house. They were only there for about an hour and a half, but Harry would then have loads of horror stories to tell Hermione about the medieval torture devices he had his sister were made to endure. Harry and Clarice secretly loved that she fell for it. They both felt guilty that they were pulling one over on her as she was their friend, but it did allow them some creative outlet. Hermione caught on quickly though. On Thursday, Harry and Clarice were taken to the Granger Dental Practice to have their teeth checked. While it turned out, aside from not flossing enough to please the Dentist - and who ever really does - their teeth were fine, they told Hermione of the tortures inflicted. She was a little miffed at them at first, but recognizing the creativity of their gag, she eventually forgave them - but promised pay back one day.

Harry's biggest adjustment problem was toilet seats. He had grown up in a house he hated with people he hated, but at least it was male dominated. He did not know just how upset a girl could be about a toilet seat being left up. He asked Hermione why it was such a big deal. She told him and he was so taken aback by the answer that he said something that made her mad. "Is it so hard to look before you sit?" That did not earn him a kiss goodnight that night.

Hermione had gained friends she had never had and a sister of sorts she adored. Harry had gained a real family, one that accepted and encouraged him and a house filled with laughter. The Grangers had never heard so much laughter in their home before and loved it. It even inspired Robert to resurrect one of his youthful passions - practical jokes, much to the chagrin of his wife and amusement of the children, at least those who were not the recent victim.

Clarice had the biggest adjustment problems of the three of them. Clarice had gained, but compared to the others she had lost the most. She missed her parents terribly and cried herself to sleep every night even though she realized she was in a nice place with people who really cared about her. She was terrified she would forget the two people who had meant the world to her. Harry and especially Hermione were very aware of this and quietly made the Grangers aware. Through most of the day, Clarice was fine. It was only at night when the lights were out that she became inconsolable. The



Grangers promised Harry and Hermione that they would see what they could do, but never said what that might be. Harry was concerned until Hermione told him that's what her parents had said to her about letting Harry become a part of their family. With that, Harry just knew that somehow the Grangers would find a way to help his sister.

The children were expecting to go to Diagon Alley and to see Harry and Clarice's godfather whom neither had ever met the first Saturday after they got to the Grangers. Aunt Minnie, as they had begun to call McGonagall, was supposed to take them as it required a trip into the magical world, but something had come up and the trip was delayed a week.

On Thursday, June 16, the Grangers took the day off. Clarice still had troubles. The Grangers did not tell her where they were taking her and Harry until they arrived. They pulled up to her old home, the one she had lived in before her life had changed.

"Wh-why are we here?" Clarice asked.

"Harry and Hermione are concerned about you, Little One," Robert said. "So are Rosie and I. We know you're afraid that with all that's happening you'll forget those you loved and lost. We know you cry at night even though you laugh during the day. We want you to be happy again and know you can't be if you're afraid that you may forget. We contacted people to make sure you'll never forget them, okay?"

"I don't understand!"

"You're Mum wanted you to have all you could," Rose said. "We are here to sort through yours and their things. You can take whatever reminds you of them."

"Pick strong memories, Sissy," Harry added.

"And m-m-my own things?" Clarice asked.

"If you want, Little One," Robert said.



It was a hard day for Clarice. She walked though her old home looking at all the things, all with memories of a past happy life. She was so torn, Harry could see. She was also happy with her new life with him, her brother, and Hermione. She still did not want to forget. Harry was more than willing to forget his past life but saw that his Sissy had a good life before. In the end, Clarice raided her room and collected her favorite dolls and all her stuffed animals. More important to her were the pictures. Any picture of her former Mum and Dad or her was gathered as well as all photo albums. Unbeknownst to her, while she was sorting out what she wanted, the Grangers were picking through the house as well, choosing things that one day they planned to give to her - when she was older. The fancy china, the silver, her Mum's real jewelry, her Mum's wedding dress - things that one day Clarice might appreciate.

Her photos, albums, dolls and stuffed animals were all arranged on her side of the room when Hermione returned from school. Hermione said nothing, for she knew not what to say. But that night, for the first time since Clarice became Hermione's friend, roommate and sister, Clarice did not cry herself to sleep.

"She's very pretty," Hermione said the next morning.

"Who?" Clarice asked not noticing Hermione was looking at the framed photos.

"You're Mum."

"Yeah. Not my real Mum, though. Still, she was the one I knew. Wish I also could remember Harry and my real Mum."

"Know what you mean. Never seen or remember mine as well. But the Mum we have now is the one I remember and I think she's great."

"She is," Clarice said softly. "She really is."

SATURDAY, JUNE 18, 1988 - 16 WILLOW WAY, LOUGHTON, ESSEX, U.K.



Minerva McGonagall arrived at the Grangers early, just in time to enjoy one of Harry's signature breakfasts. Over breakfast there was discussion about how they were going to get the children into the magical sections of London. Sensei appeared during this discussion and emphasized that in his opinion it would be best to avoid magical transport for now. Earlier in the week he was able to peruse the course outlines for the first summer at Watanabe. He felt it was best to keep things as low profile as possible. This would be both Harry's first time in the magical world and his first time in that world since it came to believe he was dead. To Sensei's surprise, McGonagall agreed, she just did not know how to get the children there by non-magical means. It was, after all, far too far to walk.

"And just where are these places?" Robert asked.

McGonagall told him.

"Easy enough," Robert said. "They are each just a couple blocks either side of the Leicester Square Tube station. We got an Underground station here in Loughton. I'll drive the lot of you there, it's only about five minutes away, and you can take the Tube."

"I've never taken the underground trains before," McGonagall confessed.

"I have," Hermione said. "Loads of times. By myself even! I can get us there, Daddy."

"I know you can, Princess. So it's settled then?"

"I don't know," McGonagall began.

"These three are Londoners," Sensei replied, indicating the children. "Least, they probably will be. No one can claim to be a self respecting Londoner if they don't know how to use the Underground!"

"It's easy," Hermione added. "We take the train in from here. We change to the Northern Line at the Tottenham Court Road station and one stop to the south and we're at Leicester Square!"



“See?” Robert added.

---

When they arrived at the station in central Loughton it was soon apparent who was in charge of getting the group to Central London. Harry had never been on the Underground before and part of him wondered why it was called that as it was clear that the trains were above ground here. Clarice had been on occasions with her parents, but never had to use it on her own. McGonagall could count the number of times she had used it on one hand and it had been ages since her last foray. That left Hermione, who used it on her own quite often to get to and from school. She explained that she would ride her bike to the station and take the Tube in to her school. The Grangers, who were accompanying them on this trip, stood back and allowed Hermione to explain everything.

She explained everything to her three companions, from counting her money to buy her ticket, to using the new ticket kiosks, to getting through the turnstiles and onto the platform, to reading the maps for figuring out how to get where they were going and, when they arrived at Tottenham Court Road, how to change trains. Although neither she nor Harry noticed, practically from the moment they left the car until they entered a strange looking pub called The Leaky Cauldron and even later, they were holding hands the whole time. They didn't notice because they did it quite often and for them it seemed as natural as breathing. McGonagall and the Grangers, on the other hand, could not help but notice but decided to say nothing about it.

They passed through the very old looking tavern and headed out a back door into a small alley that appeared blocked off. McGonagall drew her wand and the children then realized it was the first time they had actually seen a real wand and that they were going to see some kind of magic. She tapped her wand in what looked like a clockwise, circular pattern on the bricks in front of her. She clearly had tapped five specific bricks. When she finished, the bricks began moving and eventually forming into an arch way.

“That was a pentacle, wasn't it,” Hermione observed.



"Indeed it was," McGonagall smiled. "You tap a wand on the bricks in that pattern and it opens the gate into Diagon Alley."

"What's a pentacle?" Clarice asked.

"A five pointed star," Harry said before Hermione could open her mouth."

"Oh," Clarice replied in a comprehending tone.

"Very good," McGonagall said. "It's going to be a pleasure teaching the three of you, when the time comes."

They entered the Alley and the Grangers and the three children were amazed at the scene. The Alley was actually almost as wide as a road. Four story buildings lined both sides. The ground floor were shops and it was clear that many of the upper floors were offices of some nature, although many were also flats. The buildings harkened back to a London long lost to history, with plaster walls and thick, exposed oak beams. Hermione correctly pointed out the style was known as Tudor. The ground floors had large, multi-paned windows that both allowed light into the shops and the shoppers to see what was to be sold. Harry did his best to take inventory of the shops and such as they walked through the Alley. McGonogall was clearly taking them on a tour.

Harry noted that many of the shops were not all that different from the shops the Grangers had taken him to over the past weeks. What was different is that none of the stores he was familiar with were here. He counted no less than ten stores selling women's clothes, five men's, three shoe stores and two that claimed to be outfitters and sold what looked like safari clothes. There were three advertising custom robes, four that sold children's clothing and two that sold baby stuff. There were at least five stores selling furniture and four that sold what could best be described as household goods. There were three stores that sold luggage. There were also five restaurants, as well as butcher shops, hair salons, barber shops, fish mongers, a few bakeries, a few green grocers, cheese makers, dairies, a store that sold tea and



coffee, dry goods - basically everything one could find in a supermarket.

There were also four jewelry stores and no less than five book stores that McGonagall and Robert Granger had to try and keep Hermione and Rose Granger from entering and three candy stores the adults had to keep the children from entering. Then there were the various offices: solicitors, accountants, travel agents, publishers, Healers (magical doctors), and the like. One whole building was dedicated to something called The Daily Prophet, which McGonagall explained was one of six daily newspapers in Magical Britain, this one being the London paper.

Then there were the stores that caught everyone's attention: the magical stores. The first one they saw, almost on entering the Alley was Ollivander's who made and sold wands. It was one of three wand makers in the Alley and McGonagall said it was the best of the lot, but also the most expensive. There was also Eeylops Owl Emporium which the children thought was a pet store until McGonagall explained that witches and wizards used owls to deliver the mail, which explained all the owls they saw in the post office. There was a magical pet shop as well. Then there were stores selling cauldrons, potions, potions ingredients, magical items too numerous to list, a magical joke shop and four of the most amazing toy stores any of the children had ever seen. There was a store called Quality Quidditch Supplies that looked not unlike a sporting goods store, but sold the oddest stuff. There were brooms in the window unlike any Harry had ever seen. McGonagall explained that Quidditch was a sport magicals played and they used brooms not for sweeping but for flying. Harry soon notices three other shops that sold "everyday," "family," "children's," "training," and other brooms. They reminded him of car dealerships or maybe a bicycle shop.

At the far end of the Alley was the largest building they had seen. McGonagall explained it was Gringotts, the Wizard's bank. It was where their money was kept, although she explained they would be able to access it from a non-magical account. The tour complete, she led them back down the alley, finally stopping at one of the outdoor cafes. The sign read "Florean Fortescue's Ice Cream Parlor." She handed each of the children five small, gold coins.



“Okay, you three,” she said, “that’s five Galleons each, more than enough to have whatever you want. I want you to wait here, enjoy the best ice cream in the world while I pick up the books Sensei wants you to have.”

“Where are you going, Mum and Dad?” Hermione asked.

“With Minnie,” Rose replied. “Maybe do a little window shopping as well.”

“Why can’t I come with you?” Hermione asked.

“Because we don’t have all day, Dear,” McGonagall said. “Your mother tells me that if I take you into any bookshop, we’ll be there for hours.”

Hermione frowned. She really wanted to check out the bookshops but also knew she would not be satisfied with a quick browse. She was a little upset she couldn’t go, but was more upset that her mother revealed this information.

“We’ll come back and do it proper another time, okay?,” her mother said.

“I guess,” Hermione moped.

“Aunt Minnie,” Harry asked, “I don’t understand this menu thing. You gave us these Galleons, but it looks like the prices are something else. It says stuff like 3S10K and such. What’s that?”

“S are silver Sickles and K are bronze Knuts. Basically, it’s change for a Galleon. There are twenty-nine Knuts to a Sickle and seventeen Sickles to a Galleon. You have five Galleons there, Harry. Should be more than enough. Now you three remain here while I pick up the books. Okay?”

“Yes, Aunt Minnie,” the three children replied.



Harry turned to his menu as McGonagall left them. He was trying to decide between a three-scoop hot fudge sundae (5S13K), he never had one before, and another treat he wanted to try: a root beer float (3S21K). In the end, he decided to have both. He looked up and noticed the girls were still studying there menus. A woman's voice caught his attention.

"This place is always so crowded," she complained. Harry saw a short plump woman with red hair. With her were for red haired children, three boys - two who looked like twins - and a little girl. "Oh," the woman said looking in his direction. "Just our luck. There some seats over there." Harry watched as the family of red heads made a beeline for the table.

"Remember Harry," Hermione whispered to him as the children approached, "Don't use your real name."

"What? Oh yeah. Right. Hank Peters it is then."

"Whatever you say, Hank," Clarice giggled.

"It's not a bad name," Harry complained.

"It's so not you."

"Fine."

"Good morning," the woman announced looking at Harry and the others. "Would it be okay if my children joined you at your table?"

"No problem," Harry said.

"Right then, tuck in you lot." The four children took their seats. "Now here you go," she said handing each of them five silver coins.

"But I can't get a sundae with only five Sickles," the younger boy complained.

"Nonsense, Ronald," the woman scolded. "You can get a two scoop Sundae. You just can't stuff yourself. And, a two scoop Sundae is



more than you'll deserve if you don't stop complaining! The lot of you have been begging to come here all morning. I can change my mind and your brothers and sister will know it's your fault they can't enjoy a treat!"

"Fine," the boy moped.

"Okay, the four of you stay here. Your father and I have a spot of shopping to do and I know how much you love that. Be back in a few."

"Bye Mum," one of the older boys said.

"Spot on that one," the other older boy said as their mother hurried back into the crowds, "I'd rather have my fingernails pulled out than go shopping."

"Bloody annoying, really," the other agreed.

"Course I'll make an exception for the joke shop."

"Most definitely."

"Where are our manners," one said noticing Harry and the others.

"You know we don't have any," the other replied. "Mum reminds us of that on occasion."

"Like about every five minutes."

"Probably whispers it to us in our sleep."

"Shouts it through the door when we're in the loo."

"All through meals."

"That's mostly Ronnykins."

"Oi!" the younger boy complained.



“Sad but true, little bro. Your eating habits are terrible.”

“Are not!”

“Mum says they are so they are,” the other brother said.

“Fine!”

“Anyway,” one of the boys turned to Harry and the others. “I’m Fred Weasley and the ugly one next to me is George.”

“I thought you were the ugly one,” the other said, “and I thought we agreed I’m Fred.”

“That’s Fred,” the girl said pointing to one of the twins, “and the other one is George.”

“Busted,” Fred said.

“Only ‘cause Ginny is the only one we know who can actually tell us apart,” George added.

“Takes all the fun out of life,” Fred sighed. “We’re ten. Our snitch of a little sister is Ginny and she’s six.”

“I’ll be seven in August,” Ginny corrected.

“A point she’s made,” Fred began.

“Three times a day,” George added.

“Every day.”

“Since about - oh?”

“The day after her sixth birthday,” Fred finished.

“And this complaining git is our eight year old miserable excuse for a little brother Ron,” George added. As harsh as it sounded, there was laughter in his voice indicating he was not serious.



"We're the Weasleys," Ginny added smiling.

"The ones Sensei mentioned," Hermione whispered in Harry's ear. Harry nodded in agreement.

"Merlin's pants," the girl exclaimed pointing at Harry's head. "You're him, aren't you?"

"Scar," Hermione whispered in Harry's ear after noting his confusion. Harry reached behind him. He had a ball cap tucked into his belt. He removed it and placed it on his head, hiding the offending scar.

"Hank Peters," Harry said.

"No you're not," the girl said. "You're him. I know it! You're Harry Potter, the-Boy-Who-Lived!" She practically yelled the last bit. Harry and his companions immediately looked around and to their surprise, no one seemed to notice.

"Wards," Clarice suggested.

"Probably," Harry agreed. "Bloody useful."

Hermione was too concerned about what might happen to scold Harry for his language.

Harry glared at the girl. "And what if I am," he said with as menacing a growl as he could muster.

"But Mum said you're dead," the girl said quietly.

"It would seem that the rumors of my untimely demise have been exaggerated," Harry said earning a giggle from Hermione and Clarice.

"You're really him," the younger boy asked.

"My name is Harry Potter," Harry sighed. "As to that other chap, no idea who or what he is. Been cursed with the same name..."



“But your scar,” the little girl protested. “The books all say that...”

“Car crash,” Harry said. “That’s where I got this I was told.”

“Besides Gin-Gin,” one of the older boys said, “those books also say said Boy-Who-Lived had blonde hair, blue eyes and killed a dragon when he was three?”

“Doubt this kid killed a dragon,” the other added.

“But his name! It’s the same! He is The-Boy-Who-Lived.”

“Who everyone knows is dead, Gin-Gin.”

“Boy-Who-Lived,” Harry said, “what a load of rubbish. Although, my Uncle did try to beat me to death a few weeks ago and failed so maybe...”

“Are you ready to order?” a young woman said standing beside the table holding a note pad.

“Yes,” Harry said. “I’ll try a three scoop vanilla hot fudge sundae and a root beer float.”

“Oooh, that sounds good,” Clarice said. “Me too!”

“Make that three,” Hermione added.

“Can’t afford that,” the younger boy grumbled.

“Make it seven then,” Harry said. “That’s what? A Galleon, six Sickles and six Knuts, right?”

The waitress was busy computing the bill. When she finished she looked at Harry in surprise. “That’s right. How did you know that?”

“My brother’s a math whiz,” Clarice said proudly.

Harry handed the waitress two Galleons. “Keep the change,” he added. He had always wanted to say that.



"You are a gentleman and a scholar," the waitress said before leaving to place the order.

"I don't know about the gentleman bit," Clarice chided.

"Don't be silly, Clarice," Hermione said. She then kissed Harry on the cheek, "he's the perfect gentleman - usually."

"You weren't saying that a few days ago, Hermione," Clarice said. "I believe you called him a mean bastard with a few other words that are just bad."

"Clarice," Hermione scolded.

"You did!"

"Yeah, well ... what he did was so ..."

"It could just as easily have been me and it's not like we didn't provoke him."

"I know, still..."

"What are you on about?" George asked.

"Harry pranked me," Hermione pouted.

"Really?"

"Do tell," Fred added eagerly.

"Actually, the prank was aimed at either of you," Harry said with a smirk. "Payback, you know."

"What do you mean?" Fred asked.

"Last Sunday I was getting out of the shower and all my clothes were gone," Harry said. "Not only that, there were no towels or anything in the bathroom. I tried to make a quick dash to my room, but these two



were waiting in the hall for me to come out. They had a camera and started taking pictures.”

“We told you there was no film in it,” Clarice said. “Like I’d want naked pictures of my own brother,” she added rolling her eyes in disgust.

“Why would they do that?” Ron asked.

“I accidentally walked in on Hermione when she was getting out of the shower.”

“A likely story,” Hermione said rolling her eyes, but laughing.

“What did he do, pray tell?” George asked.

“He saran wrapped the toilet bowl,” Clarice said.

“Saran wrap?” Fred asked.

“It’s a plastic wrap used for food and such,” Hermione said. “He put it over the toilet bowl. It’s almost invisible and when I tried to take a pee, instead of the pee going into the bowl it splashed back up all over me and the floor and such.”

“Better watch it Fred,” George laughed, “we have competition.”

“Indeed. Need to keep an eye on these three,” Fred added.

“Who knows? We might learn a few tricks.”

“If you san wrap the toilet, I’ll hex you!” Ginny growled.

The waitress arrived and handed over their orders. As they began to eat, Fred asked, “so tell us about you. I mean, we have heard of the Boy-Who-Lived...”

“Now known as the Boy-Who-Lived-Then-Died-Then-Didn’t-But-Doesn’t-Want-Anyone-To-Know-He-Didn’t,” George added. Harry laughed at that. He liked these two although he was not sure about the others.



"I take it the three of you live in the same home?" Fred asked.

"Recent development," Harry said.

"Do tell."

"This is my best friend," Harry said taking Hermione's hand, "my first real friend actually. Her name is Hermione Granger and she's eight years old and really smart and pretty. Her real parents were students at Hogwarts when she was born and she had to be placed for adoption apparently. She was adopted by the Grangers who are not magical but know about it, and they are wonderful parents. Her real parents died in the War.

"This is Clarice Jameson," Harry said indicating his sister. "She's almost seven. She's my little sister."

"For real?" George asked.

Harry nodded. "Our parents were killed in the War and we were separated. I went to live with our Aunt and Uncle, who were not magical, and she was placed for adoption. Don't ask us why that happened 'cause we don't know yet. Anyway, her parents were wonderful too. But her dad died of cancer about a year ago and she and her mum were in a car crash about a month ago. Her mum was killed and she was injured and sent to St. Bart's hospital. Just so happens, I was there too.

"My Uncle had tried to beat me to death..."

"Why?" Ginny asked.

Harry shrugged. "He was a mean bastard. Beat his wife too. I wound up at St. Bart's and the social people took me away from them. Hermione's parents had found me when I was hurt and then agreed to take me in. When we learned Clarice was my sister and also an orphan, they took her in as well."

"Rich and famous," Ron grumbled staring at his food.



“Hey!” Harry shot back. “Maybe I have a few Galleons, but I’d give it all up if it brought my parents back!”

“You’re such a Git, Ronald,” Ginny said.

“I don’t know what your problem is,” Harry said. “Until very recently, my life sucked! I was beaten black and blue frequently. My Uncle has a bad day at work, I get a whipping that tore the skin from my back. I look like I smiled, a beating. I talk or make a sound, a broken arm. I slept in a closet for as long as I can remember. I ate table scraps if there were any. They say I was starving. The only time I was allowed to leave the house was to go to church or to school, assuming I could ‘cause I was often too hurt to move. Until very recently, there was hardly a day where I was not in pain all the time. I once dropped a light bulb and my Uncle punished me by sticking my finger in the light socket...”

“He tried to electrocute you?” Hermione gasped.

“To be honest, I’m surprised he didn’t try and burn me at the stake. He knew I was magical and that’s why he did a lot of that.”

“So you’ve been living as Muggles all this time?” Fred asked trying to keep the conversation going despite his younger brother.

Harry nodded.

“Are they all like that?” Ginny asked. “Do they all hate us that much?”

“No,” Hermione said. “Most are not like that at all. Harry’s Uncle was evil! They arrested him for it in the end. But he burned to death in a fire before he could be tried for hurting My Harry.” She said that with such conviction. Harry was surprised that it pleased him as much as it did. The message was clear to Ginny as well. Harry was not available and probably never would be. Her fantasy of being the Bride-of-The-Boy-Who-Lived died then and there. Oddly, she didn’t mind at all.

“Hermione’s parents are not magical,” Harry said. “They are wonderful people.”



They spent the next half hour or more talking about the non magical world. It was clear to Harry, Hermione and Clarice that these Weasleys knew next to nothing about the world where they lived. The three learned that the Weasleys had three older brothers all off at Hogwarts. The oldest was Bill who was a Sixth Year Prefect. Charlie was in his Fourth Year and played something called "Seeker" on the Gryffindor Quidditch team. The three had learned some about Hogwarts from Sensei and knew the students lived in four "Houses," each named for one of the Founders and that the Houses competed against one another all year. The youngest Weasley at Hogwarts was Percy.

"The most boring Weasley of all," Fred complained. "His First Year is almost over - they come home next Saturday - and he still hasn't served a single detention. Giving the family a bad name, he is."

"It's nice to see you lot can stay put for once," a woman's voice interrupted. Harry and the others looked to see that Mrs. Weasley had returned. Standing next to her was a tall man with short red hair and glasses. The woman looked at the now empty dishes on the table and gasped.

"Where did you get all of that?" she said to her four children. "I only gave you five Sickles and I know that cost more than five Sickles."

"Harry bought it, Mum," Ginny said.

"Harry who, young lady?"

"Harry Potter," she said with glee pointing to Harry. "You know," she drawled, "as in The-Boy-Who-Lived?"

"I've had just about enough of that, young lady! He's just a story book character. He's no more real than Father Christmas!"

Ginny pouted.

"She's read all the books," George explained to Harry and the others. "Really into them, she is."



"Did you really buy them all that?" Mrs. Weasley asked.

Harry nodded.

"How much did it cost?"

Harry shrugged.

"One six and six," Ron mumbled. "Paid them two Galleons a didn't even want change."

"Well then, the lot of you will just have to give Harry here the five Sickles I gave you to help pay him back," Mrs. Weasley began.

"No!" Harry protested. "It's my allowance money! I can spend it anyway I want and I wanted to buy them their ice cream."

"That's very nice of you Dear but..."

"No buts! Our parents and our magical guardian Aunt Minnie both told us it's our money to use as we please."

"If we don't spend it here," Hermione added, "we're going to have changed into pounds so we can spend it when we get home."

"You lot live with Muggles?" Mr. Weasley asked. The three nodded. "That must be fascinating!"

"But that can't be, Arthur," Mrs. Weasley complained. "It's still the school year and even if it wasn't, Muggle Borns aren't even told about magic until they're eleven. Do any of these children look like they're eleven?"

"Well, no," Arthur Weasley said.

"That's just silly," Ginny said.

"What do you mean Pumpkin," Arthur asked.



"They're witches and wizards, right? They were born that way, weren't they? Or was it all stories you were telling me?"

"True," Mrs. Weasley said, "but that's not the custom. Muggle Borns are not told until they are old enough to start magical school."

"And yet we are?" Ginny said. "That's just stupid! That's like telling these gits," she said pointing to her brothers, "that they are boys as soon as they could talk but not telling me I am a girl until I am eleven!"

"She has a point Molly," Arthur said.

"But it just isn't done," Molly Weasley complained.

"Perhaps it should be," Ginny all but shouted in indignation.

"Mrs. Weasley," Harry asked, "can magic be detected? Can magicals determine that a child is magical or not?"

"Of course," Molly said, "at least that's what we are told."

"Does it make sense to you to deny that information to the child and his family? Shouldn't the government be interested in protecting magical children from the potential backlash from their non magical families?"

"What do you mean?"

"Clarice is my sister. I only met her about a month ago. When we were babies our real parents - magical parents - were killed in the War. Clarice was set for adoption and was adopted by a loving non-magical couple. The father she knew died from cancer. Her mum was killed in a car crash. She was hurt and wound up in the same hospital as me and we were finally reunited and Hermione's parents took us in.

"In my case, I was sent to live with my Aunt and Uncle. I was sent there by this Dumbledore git."

"Dumbledore?" Molly asked. "Albus Dumbledore?"



"That's him."

"I'm sure he did what was best if that's the case."

"An I'm sure he cooks children into pies like the witches I read about in kids books," Harry said. "He separated me and my sister and saw to it I was tortured."

"You are exaggerating," Molly began.

"Want to see the scars?" Harry replied. "Dumbledore sent me to live with my Aunt and Uncle! According to my parent's Will, I should never have been sent there - period! I was beaten most every day! They hated me! They knew I was magical and wanted to beat it out of me! They nearly killed me, which was why I met Hermione. She and her parents found me and sent me to a hospital and she stayed with me the - well most of the time - and they took me into their family. It was at that hospital that Clarice was sent and I found my sister and she too now lives with the Grangers.

"Where the hell was your government when I was being beaten?"

"Excuse me?" Molly asked.

"Isn't it against the law to beat children or to put a child in that situation?"

"It is," Arthur said.

"Well this Dumbledore guy did that to me. He's supposed to be the good guy and he did that to me. Why? I was just a baby when it happened. Why take my sister away? Why was I sent to people who beat me? Why? Does that sound like a good man to you?"

"I never really thought about that," Molly confessed.

"All three of us had magical parents," Harry continued. "All of our birth parents were killed in the war and we were all sent to live with non-magical families because people thought we'd be safer there. That



may have been true for Hermione and Clarice as their adoptive parents were or are great, but it was not true for me at all. Whatever risk there was that one day an evil wizard might find me was far less than the daily risk at the hands of my non-magical relatives.”

Molly looked at him skeptically as if she felt he was surely exaggerating. Hermione picked up on the look. “Want to see his scars?” she suggested. “His back is covered with them.”

Molly could see Harry, Clarice and Hermione glaring at her. They were almost hostile. “You,” she began, “you poor Dear. I really don’t know what to say.”

“Fortunately,” Harry shrugged, “that part of my life is over. Orphaned again, I now live with Hermione and Clarice and the Grangers. They are wonderful people.”

“Oh,” Hermione interrupted, “here they come! Oh my! Daddy’s sure carrying a lot of bags!” The Grangers soon arrived at the table. Mr. Granger seemed to be carrying several bags. “Everybody,” Hermione said, “these are my parents Robert and Rose Granger. They’re dentists and have their own practice in London. They adopted me when I was a baby and they are now Harry and Clarice’s foster parents. Mum and Dad, these are Mr. and Mrs. Weasley and four of their children, Fred, George, Ron and Ginny. They’re all magical.”

“What’s dentists?” Ron asked.

“We’re doctors who fix people’s teeth,” Rose replied.

“Teeth need fixing?”

“Sometimes.”

“Oh.”

After pleasantries were exchanged and a long discussion of what dentists did for people Molly asked: “Just out of curiosity, how did you find your way here?”



“Oh,” Robert replied. “Minnie brought us. She should be here soon. She’s Hermione’s Great-grandmother, but she prefers the kids to call her Aunt Minnie. Here she is.”

The Weasleys turned to see the elderly lady approaching.

“P-Professor McGonagall?” Molly asked.

“Ah Arthur and Molly,” McGonagall said brightly. “Out for a bit of shopping?”

Molly nodded. “Professor?”

“I see you’ve met the Grangers and Harry and Clarice.”

Molly nodded again. “Professor,” she began, “um - well Hermione said that...”

“I am her Great-grandmother?”

Molly nodded.

“It’s true. Long story but it ended up with Hermione’s adoption by Robert and Rose. They are wonderful people and she has a wonderful family. They were kind enough to allow me to - er - get to know my only living relative.

“Anyway it’s fortunate that I ran into you. Meaning to write you a letter as your sons’ Head of House.”

“What did Charlie do this time?” Molly sighed in exasperation.

“While I suspect he may have helped, it wasn’t Charlie.”

“Bill?”

McGonagall shook her head.

“Percy?” Molly asked in disbelief. “But he’s never caused trouble!”



"Guess he was saving up for a huge end of year prank," McGonagall sighed.

"What did he do?"

"At breakfast yesterday he somehow caused all the Slytherins outer garments to disappear. It was surprising to see how many of them don't wear any underwear."

"He didn't," Molly said slowly turning red.

"He most certainly did! He admitted as much in front of the entire school - well, everyone but the Slytherins who ran back to their dorms. He then announced that next year Weasley's Wonderful World of Magical Merriment will be open for the entertainment of the masses."

"And the others?" Molly growled.

"We think they helped but cannot prove it. Some of the magic Percy used was well beyond First Year level."

"Punishment?"

"Five points for each partially naked Slytherin and twenty-five for each naked one. Slytherin already had the House Cup locked up despite our winning Quidditch. Percy's actions reduced the total Gryffindor points to almost zero. Oddly, his House mates don't seem to care. Oh yes! He's in detention for the rest of this term and three days a week for the first two months of next term..."

Molly turned bright red and all but ran from the table and down the Alley.

"Where's she off to?" Rose Granger asked.

"Post Office most like," Arthur said.

"She's gonna send Perfect Percy a Howler!" Fred laughed.

"Maybe Charlie and Bill too," George added.



“Probably,” Fred agreed. “She’ll want a piece of them too for not stopping him.”

“Who would have thought?”

“Perfect Percy becomes Percy Prank Master.”

“What’s a Howler?”

“It’s a magical letter that allows the writer to yell at some one,” Fred said.

“At about ten times normal volume,” George added with a laugh.



## CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO: ST. MUNGO'S

SATURDAY, JUNE 18, 1988 - DIAGON ALLEY, LONDON, U.K.

The Grangers, McGonagall and Mr. Weasley spent the next several minutes talking off to a side while the children continued talking with each other. Harry was able to hear snippets of the conversation and realized that McGonagall and Mr. Weasley were trying to encourage the Grangers to allow the three of them to visit the Weasley children or vice versa every once in a while.

"It would be a wonderful introduction to the magical world and allow them room to play and children like them to play with," Mr. Weasley said. "It would also provide my kids with an introduction into the Muggle world. It's amazing how little we really know about it or understand it. Molly may not be too keen on the idea, but I think our children should learn all they can about the world at large. Goodness knows I know so little about it and I'm a supposed expert! Never even heard of Dentists before, can you imagine?"

"I mean I know cars and such, but have no idea what makes them tick really. I know about electricity, but have no idea what it is and such. My real dream is to learn what makes airplanes stay up. I'm sure that's all common knowledge to you all, but we know nothing about it."

The problem was, while everyone came to agree it would be a wonderful idea, the Granger family schedule was packed for the time being. Hermione still had a week of school and Clarice still had to finish her lessons. Once school ended, they had only a few days to get ready for their trip to Japan to the Watanabe School - the Grangers called it a summer camp. After that, they would be home for less than a week as they planned to leave for America on holiday on from August 2nd to the 16th. There were some whispers as well, but it was generally agreed that any "play dates" would probably be after the Grangers returned from America.

Molly returned as the conversation seemed to end. She seemed more relaxed and Fred explained to Harry, Hermione and Clarice that their Mum could yell a storm, but usually calmed down afterwards.



Percy and his older brothers were probably grounded for the summer, but once they got home they would probably have to do nothing more than de-gnome the garden a few times, a chore George then explained to the three children which did not seem all that bad at all. Everyone soon said goodbye as the Weasleys had more shopping to do and the Grangers had appointments at St. Mungo's, the magical hospital. Harry had been told they were going there to see his godfather and was surprised about "appointments." To be honest, he was tired of Doctors.

---

They left Diagon Alley and walked a couple of blocks through the non-magical part of London before arriving at an old looking department store called Purge & Dowse, Ltd. The sign said it was closed for renovations. McGonagall told everyone that it was really the magical hospital and the façade was to keep non-magicals from being too curious. In the store window were manikins wearing faded clothes that looked at least twenty years out of date. It was explained that most visitors used magical transport to get to the hospital, but this was the "street" access.

McGonagall spoke with one of the dummies in the window and the window seemed to shimmer. She told them to just walk strain through. It took a little convincing before Harry gave it a try. He passed right through what should have been glass and brick and found himself in a reception area. The others soon followed.

McGonagall led the others to what looked like a receptionist beneath a sign that said "Welcome Witch." She stated her purpose, that there were appointments for the three children with Pediatrics for check-ups and then they were going to visit a patient named Sirius Black. The witch at the counter didn't seem to bat an eye. They were directed down a hall to the third corridor on the left and then all the way to the end where there was a waiting room and they could check in with the duty nurse for their appointments. Sirius Black was on the Fourth Floor in room 437.



Harry complained at first. No one had told him he had to see a doctor! He had spent a month in hospital! He was sick of doctors! McGonagall explained this was a magical check up and as he never had one before it was important. Upon hearing magic would be involved, he calmed down a little. Hermione, on the other hand, practically squealed with glee at the thought. They checked in at Pediatrics and waited to be called. Clarice seemed indifferent, Harry seemed to mope, but Hermione seemed to fidget with anticipation and experiencing even more of this strange and exciting world.

They did not have to wait long. Hermione was called first and she and McGonagall went off with a woman who called herself Healer Anna Meadows. Clarice was next and left with Rose Granger and Healer Tabitha Tobias. Harry was called moments later by Healer Ted Tonks. Robert Granger went with him.

"Call me Ted," Healer Tonks said as they entered what looked to Mr. Granger to be a fairly ordinary examination room.

"Bob."

"Non-magical, right?"

Bob nodded.

"I was raised that way. My whole family was non-magical 'cept me. Bit of a surprise when I found out, you know. First time to St. Mungo's?"

"It is."

"What do you do for a living, Bob?"

"My wife and I are Dentists. We have our own practice not far from here."

"Really? Another health care professional? Wonderful. Well, you may note many of the things we do today are little different than what you are used to, but some are very different."



“Looking forward to it.”

“Right then, let’s see what’s what little guy!” Ted said turning to Harry. “Let’s get you up on the table here,” he added lifting Harry onto what looked like an ordinary examination table. Ted then brought out what looked like an ordinary blood pressure device and stethoscope.

“That’s just like what they used at my other hospital,” Harry observed.

“A lot of our stuff is,” Ted replied. “In some instances, we really haven’t come up with magic that’s truly better than technology. Fair few Purebloods hate that. For example, we don’t really have any magical dentists.”

“You don’t?” Harry and Bob Granger said simultaneously.

“Oh, there are some things we can do with magic, but fixing cavities and straitening teeth - nope. We have contracts with regular Dentists to do teeth. Which reminds me...our London Dentist retired recently. It’s a real bother referring people to Birmingham for their work. If you and your wife are interested, we might be able to throw some business your way.”

“How would that work? Would they come to our office?”

“No. There’s an office in Diagon Alley. You would have a magical device called a Portal installed at your office that would allow you or your wife to step between one and the other.”

“Staffing?”

“Two Dental Hygienists and an x-ray technician, all Muggles with magical relatives. The receptionist and records keeper are witches.”

“I’ll talk to my wife about it.”

“Brilliant! Now to our little patient.”

The first part of the examination was not unlike the examinations Harry had experienced at the hospital. Having been through more



than a few, it actually put his mind at ease a little. Deep down, however, he was concerned that this Healer would wind up giving him more shots. He had come to hate needles. He was then asked to drink a strange looking, ruby red liquid.

“What’s this?” Harry asked.

“It’s a diagnostic potion, Harry,” Healer Tonks replied. “You’ll be taking at least two different ones today. This one allows me to do an internal exam and see how your injuries are recovering. It will also allow me access to your vital organs to see how they’re doing. I’ll be honest, it’s not the best tasting stuff in the world, but the rest of the exam is painless.”

“Okay, I guess,” Harry said sheepishly as he put the potion to his lips.

“YUCK!” he exclaimed. “That’s nasty!”

The Healer then waved his wand over Harry’s body and Harry saw it glowing with different colors. What Harry did not see, Robert did. Behind Harry were three dimensional representations of Harry’s internals: bones, organs, everything. The Healer could even magnify the image.

“That’s amazing!” Robert said.

“Better than an MRI,” Healer Tonks agreed. “The one drawback is we have yet to come up with an effective way to store the imagery for later review. So, I have to take copious notes.”

“So why aren’t you writing?”

“Look over there,” the Healer said indicating a desk in the corner. Harry and Robert looked and could see a quill furiously writing away all by itself. “It’s a mind linked quill,” Healer Tonks explained. “It’s keyed to my mind. I think it, it writes it down.” Several minutes passed as the Healer continued his wand waving and observation of the imagery.

Harry could see the Healer frown.



“What’s wrong?” he asked.

“Well, for the most part nothing,” Healer Tonks said. “Your injuries have healed very nicely and it looks like they took real good care of you at St. Bart’s. You’re health is fairly good all things considered and you seem to be eating well now. How long have you been with the Grangers?”

“Not long,” Harry said. “They’re my foster parents. I went with them when I left hospital. Before I was hurt, I never met them before.”

“Who did you live with before, Harry?”

“My Aunt and Uncle.”

“Were they the ones who hurt you?”

Harry nodded. “Mostly my Uncle, but yeah.”

“Did they feed you?”

“Not much.”

“That’s patently obvious. You are clearly showing signs of prolonged malnutrition. That’s what’s got me concerned.”

“Why?”

“Your gastro-intestinal system shows classic signs of acute distress associated with prolonged malnutrition.”

“What’s that mean?”

“The system consists of your stomach, small intestine and large intestine. It helps you eat and digest food. Most of the digesting happens in your small intestine which is like a long hose that’s tangled up in your tummy. What’s left is usually waste, but your large intestine tries to get more food out of it. What’s left after that is poop. What I can see from the scans is your stomach is too small for your



size. I need to run another scan so see just how much damage you suffered and whether we can fix it, okay?"

"I - I guess."

"This next test will test your magical development. Again, you'll have to take a potion, although it's not as bad tasting as the last one, okay?"

Harry nodded as a grey potion was handed to him. He drank it and it was actually rather bland. Again, the Healer began waving his wand and Harry watched the magical quill scribbling furiously.

"Interesting," Healer Tonks said.

"What?" both Harry and Robert asked?

"I expected a stunting of his magical development due to his nutritional deficiency, just not this much. It seems Harry's magical core is bound."

"What does that mean?" Harry asked.

"You are a magical being, Harry," the Healer said. "As such, you have a physical and magical body. The physical body is human. The magical body we call a 'core.' It does not physically exist, but it grows just as your body does, although it keeps growing long after you have reached your physical maturity. By being 'bound,' I mean someone has tied it up in a magical rope, for lack of a better description. It's a spell. It means your magical core is not being allowed to grow."

"Why would somebody do that?" Robert asked.

"Don't know," Healer Tonks said. "It's illegal to do without Healer authorization and as Harry here has never seen a Healer... The effect is to stunt his growth magically. So long as he's bound, he can never achieve his full potential magically. Medically, the spell is only authorized if the child has a history of potentially dangerous bouts of accidental magic. And even then, the bindings are removed when the child is six or seven. To leave them on longer is dangerous."



"Who would do such a thing?" Robert asked.

"Dumbledore," Harry said flatly. "He wants a martyr, remember?"

"But why this?"

"Maybe I was a powerful wizard," Harry suggested. "Maybe I was powerful enough to come through this alive. Kind of hard to be a martyr if your murderer can't kill you."

"Can you remove this binding?" Robert asked.

"I'm going to have to," Healer Tonks replied. "The prolonged malnutrition has stunted Harry's growth both physically and magically. He should be at least three inches taller than he is. Now fortunately his condition was discovered before he entered puberty so it may be reversible. There are treatment I can prescribe that will allow him to catch up to where he should be, but they won't work properly if his magic remains bound. Aside from that, he's healthy."

"Treatments?"

"I am going to prescribe a potions regimen for Harry. The first potion will be an unbinder to remove the bind on his magic. He will take one dose daily for three weeks. Once that is done, he will take two potions that will aid in both his physical and magical growth. He will take those daily, one potion with one meal and the other with another meal, for six months. Those potions will allow him to catch up to where he should be had he been properly nourished. You do know that as a magical child he needs half as much food again per day than a non-magical child, don't you?"

Robert Granger nodded.

"Good. Now for the last bit and the one I am sure Harry is going to hate."

"Shots?" Harry asked with dread in his voice.



The Healer nodded. "You got shots in the Muggle world for Muggle diseases. Well there are magical diseases as well. Since you have now entered our world, you need the shots to keep you healthy."

"I hate shots! They gave me a bunch of them when I was in hospital."

"I know, but it is necessary, Harry."

"Fine! What are they?"

"You need one to prevent Dragon Pox. That's a nasty disease that can be disfiguring as in make you look real bad for the rest of your life. There's another for Spratogotti, another nasty and disfiguring illness. Finally, there's a shot for Wizard's Flu. While that one won't damage you physically, it can damage your magic."

"I guess," Harry moped.

---

Sophie Tompkins opened the door to the private room occupied by one Sirius Black. She could not help it, she thought. As a Healer, she was supposed to be developing a detached objectivity to her patients. But this man, long in Azkaban and recently exonerated of any wrong doing did something to her on an emotional level she never knew she had. Try as she might to stop it, she knew she was falling in love with the man.

"Sirius?" she asked softly.

"I'm decent," he said with a chuckle. Sirius was not bed ridden. His room had a comfortable sitting area with a large window and a view and he was seated in a recliner reading a book. He was allowed out of bed, but could only leave the room for therapy or examinations. Since he could not leave the hospital, his room was fine. He found the rest of the hospital almost as depressing a residence as the prison. Still, he had taken a huge step up in quality of life and this Sophie was worth any mild restrictions. When he could leave this



place, he had decided he was going to ask the younger woman out. Goodness knows he could use a date.

"You have a visitor," she said.

"Serious?"

"No, you are," she chuckled having long since learned his love of puns on his name. "Shall I send him in?"

"By all means, Sophie Luv."

She blushed. She's so lovely when she does that, he thought.

A tall, sandy haired man entered the room. "Sirius?" he asked.

"Moony!" Sirius exclaimed. "Damn it's good to see you!" Sirius leapt to his feet and hugged his old friend. "Sophie? This is my oldest living friend, Remus Lupin."

"Pleased to meet you," Sophie said.

Remus looked at Sirius and raised an eyebrow.

"This is Sophie Tompkins," Sirius continued. "She's a Healer in Training assigned to keep me in line."

"An impossible task, no doubt. Nobody's succeeded before," Remus laughed.

"Oh, he's not so bad," Sophie said. With that she smiled and left the room.

"You old dog," Remus laughed at his friend.

"What?"

"She's a cutie."

"I swear, I've been a perfect gentleman to the young lady."



"A first?"

"Note I used past tense. I am considering asking her out once they release me."

"You like her?"

Sirius nodded. "Then again, six and a half years in Azkaban..."

"Had I known," Remus Lupin said, "I would have tried to do something..." His voice faded away as his guilt in believing his best friend was a murderer overcame him.

"How could you?" Sirius asked honestly. "You weren't there and I'd dare say the powers that be controlled the news. I'm just glad to see you, my old friend."

"Yeah, me too, Padfoot. No one should have been made to suffer what you did."

"Hmph."

"What?"

"If McGonagall is right, I got off easy."

"What do you mean? You were in Azkaban! Never tried! That's hell on earth! You are alive when most would be dead!"

"As Padfoot, I found I could avoid the worst of it. Damn Dementors left my shaggy ass alone. But Harry was sentenced to the Dursleys!"

"Who? Harry? Not Harry Potter?"

"Dumbledore seems to have sent MY GODSON! to live with Lily's vile sister! Lily and James were clear that that could never happen except over their dead bodies... Bugger all! That's what happened!"

"And it cost little Harry his life," Remus said sadly.



“Actually, I’m told he’s safe.”

“What?” Remus exclaimed in disbelief, “How? I mean it’s been in the papers he was confirmed dead! They had a memorial service to him and everything!”

“A reliable source informed me he was in hospital at the time of his alleged demise,” Sirius chuckled. “I even have a picture of the lad taken after he supposedly died.” Sirius showed Remus the photo of Harry with the two girls. “Seven years old and already a babe magnet,” Sirius said with a laugh.

“Who are the girls?”

“One is his sister Clarice.”

“Sister? I didn’t know he had a sister.”

“She was born when you were on the continent for Dumbledore. She was three months old when it all happened. That night, Dumbledore asked me to take her to a friend of mine so she could be adopted. He said it was necessary that they be separated for their own safety and, at the time, I agreed. She was. Her adoptive father died a year or so ago. She and her Mum were in a car crash about a month ago. She was injured, her mother was killed and she wound up at the same hospital as Harry.”

“And Harry?”

“Haven’t seen him,” Sirius confessed. “McGonagall said the bastards damn near killed him. He was starved, unloved and beaten for sport!”

“I’ll kill the bastards, just say the word.”

“Too late.”

“What do you mean?”

“The Dursleys are dead already.”



“How?”

And Sirius then began to tell his one remaining friend all he had been told about the life and suffering of his Godson.

---

Harry and Robert stopped by the Apothecary on the way back to the main waiting room where they were going to meet up with the others. Harry was given a single, clear vial containing a pale blue liquid. The Potions Master explained it was the potion that he would take to unbind his magic, but the vial would provide him with all three potions. It was a magical vial that replenished itself after use. Once he took a dose, the vial would remain empty until it was time for his next dose. When he finished taking the unbinding potion, the vial would provide him with a physical growth potion each morning and the magical growth potion in time to be taken with his supper. Both Robert and Harry thought this was pretty cool.

When they arrived in the waiting room, the others were waiting. Clarice was holding a vial not unlike his own. He could see she had been crying.

“What’s the matter, Sis?” Harry asked.

“Sh-shots,” Clarice said. “I hate them!”

“Yeah,” Harry agreed. “I had them too.”

“So did Hermione,” Clarice added.

“What’s that for?” Harry asked indicating the vial.

“Some potion I have to take. The Healer said something about my magic being binded.”

“Me too.”



“Really?”

Harry nodded. “After that, I have to take potions to grow. Healer Tonks said I’m no where near as big or as magical as I should be ‘cause my relatives didn’t feed me right.”

“Oh. I’m sorry.”

Harry shrugged.

“Hermione’s lucky,” Clarice added. “She doesn’t have to take icky potions.”

Harry looked at Hermione. She was holding several pamphlets. “What’d you get, Hermione?”

She smiled at him. “A bunch of things to read about magical sicknesses and medicine and stuff! Isn’t this day exciting?”

“Well, I suppose. I never consider getting shots exciting.”

“Okay, aside from the shots,” Hermione agreed rubbing one of her arms. “That wasn’t fun.”

“Well,” McGonagall said, “let’s head up.”

“Where?” Clarice asked.

“We’re going to visit your godfather, Sweetie,” Rose Granger said. “He’s staying here for a while.”

“Oh.”

---

---

The three children and three adults followed the directions to the main stairway and climbed for what seemed like forever until they reached the fourth floor where they had been told Sirius was staying. As they emerged from the stairway, they found themselves in yet



another waiting area with yet another “Welcome Witch.” She did not seem as friendly as the one they had met before.

“May I help you?” she asked in a bored voice.

“We’re here to visit one of your patients,” McGonagall said.

“Which one?” the witch replied sharply.

“Sirius Black.”

“Really? Friend, family, fan or are you lot here to heap abuse on him like most of his supposed visitors?”

“Friends and family,” McGonagall said.

“Relation to the patient?”

“Two of these children are his godchildren.”

“That’s a new one. Okay,” she sighed board again, “I’ll see if I can find someone to escort you back to him. Your name please?”

“Minerva McGonagall.”

“And the rest of the crowd?”

Minerva paused. She was not about to disclose that the famous yet dead Harry Potter was here. “Harry and Clarice Jameson, Robert, Rose and Hermione Granger.”

“Thank you.” The witch then saw something or someone. “Oi! Tompkins!”

A young blond woman dressed in Healer attire approached. “Yes Abigail,” the woman said impatiently.

“Black’s got some more visitors. You think you can escort them down to his room?” The voice was patronizing to say the least.



The woman looked at the visitors. "Oh, no problem," she said brightly deciding to ignore the condescending attitude. "Professor McGonagall! It's so good to see you again. Are these them?"

"Yes Sophie."

"Well, Sirius already has a visitor, but I'm sure he'll be thrilled to meet all of you!" She then turned towards the others. "I'm Healer-in-Training Sophie Thompkins. Sirius is one of my patients. Follow me please?"

Harry observed his surroundings with interest as the group headed down a long corridor. The first thing he noticed was that while the whole floor seemed very well lit, just like at the other hospital, there were no lights that he could see. He realized it had to be magic.

He then noticed a boy about his age seated on a bench. The boy had dark brown hair, but Harry could not see the boy's face for it was buried in his hands. The boy was crying quietly. Seated next to him was an older woman who might be about the same age as Aunt Minnie. The door next to the bench had a sign on it that said: "James Thickey Ward - Spell Damage - Long Term Care." Harry could not help but hear some of what the two seated people were saying.

"Your parents were very brave," the old woman said to the boy

"They're never going to get better, are they Gran?" the boy said in an almost accusing tone.

"There's always hope, Neville."

They left the crying boy behind and soon reached a door with the number 437 on it. Harry could hear laughter coming from within. The young Healer knocked, indicated to the others to wait, and went inside. Harry could hear what was being said inside.

"You seem to be quite popular today, Sirius," the young Healer's voice chided.

"How so?" a man replied.



“Feel up for some more visitors?”

“Who?” the voice asked suspiciously.

“Professor McGonagall,” the Healer replied, “and she brought some friends.”

There was a long silence before the man replied. “Bring them in.”

The Healer reappeared and motioned towards the door. “You can go in now.”

Harry seemed to instinctively take the hands of the two people on either side of him who happened to be Hermione and Clarice. He swallowed and then entered the room with the two girls at his side.

There were two men in the room each seated in a comfortable looking chair by a window that allowed the sun to light the whole room. One man was dressed in what Harry recognized as a wizard's street clothes. It would stand out on the streets of London, but would actually blend in in Diagon Alley. The man had short, sandy hair and looked to be younger than the Grangers yet older than the Healer. The other man was clearly in pajamas and a robe. He had longer, dark hair and looked really thing even from a distance. Harry could swear this man had tears in his eyes.

“As I live and breath,” the dark haired man said. He rose shakily from the chair and slowly walked over to the three children. When he was right in front of them, he knelt down and drew all three of them into a hug. Harry could sense the man was crying. He eventually broke the hug and leaned back and looked each of the children in the eye, studying them briefly.

“I'm Sirius Black,” he said. “You must be Harry,” he added looking Harry in the eye. Harry nodded.

“You must be Clarice,” he said next and then followed with “and you must be Hermione. Your ‘Aunt’ Minnie has told me a lot about all of you.



"Oh, my how you two have grown," he said with a smile. "When I last saw you, Harry, you were still trying to figure out how to walk without help, although that never stopped you from riding the broom I gave you on your first birthday," he added with a laugh.

"And Clarice, you were such a lovely little baby. I'm so sorry," he cried. "I feel I let both of you down by not being there for you."

"It's not your fault," Harry said. "We know why you couldn't help."

"Doesn't make me feel any better. I should have been there for both of you. Especially you, Harry. You know you should never have lived with those foul relations, don't you?"

Harry nodded.

"I'm sorry. I'm sorry about both of you. Some godfather I've been, eh?"

"It's okay," Clarice said. "I had wonderful parents. We understand why you could not be there and I'm glad you're here now."

"Th-thanks," Sirius said.

"You knew our parents, right?" Harry asked.

Sirius nodded. "James and Lily were among the best friends anyone could ask for. I miss them every day."

"Did you know my parents?" Hermione asked.

"Eric and Erin Puckle, right?"

Hermione nodded.

"Not as well. They were a couple of years behind James, Lily and I at school and in Ravenclaw. After they finished, I knew them through the Order of the Phoenix. They were a lovely couple. I'm sorry."



"S'okay," Hermione said looking at the floor, "I don't remember them."

"Hey," Sirius said softly, "don't be sad. Minnie said the Grangers are wonderful parents."

"They are," Hermione agreed. "Still..."

"Well, assuming the Ministry has not confiscated my property, I have pictures of them, and of James and Lily I can give the lot of you."

"Y-you do?"

"As do I," McGonagall added.

"Thanks," all three children said in unison.

Sirius laughed, "It'll give me something to do while I'm stuck here in Limbo. Tell you all what. Sometime between now and when you get back from that camp thing I've been told about, I'll give each of you albums of pictures of your parents and such."

"I'd like that," Harry said with a smile.

"How long will you be here?" Hermione asked.

"Probably until the end of July," Sirius replied.

"Why?"

"They want to fatten the old dog up a bit and make sure he's not barking," Remus Lupin spoke for the first time. "Then again, Padfoot here has been barking for a long, long time."

"Padfoot?" Harry asked. "And who are you?"

"Remus Lupin," Remus said. "I was one of your parents best friends as well. Padfoot is what we used to call Sirius here. It was his nickname in the Marauders."

"Marauders?"



"You Dad, Sirius and I were pranksters when we were in school. That's what we called ourselves. A more creative group of jokesters has never graced the halls of that fine institution."

"Don't be too sure on that score," McGonagall said. "The Weasley boys are giving you lot a run for your money and the two worst haven't even started yet."

"Weasleys? You mean Arthur and Molly's..." Sirius began.

"Bill's in his sixth year, Charlie his fourth. They gave me fits for their first three years of school each. I swear the older one eggs the younger on! Now Percy, who just finished first year is the pranking king. They seem to retire when their protégé is ready to continue the family business," McGonagall laughed. "I'm told the twins, Fred and George will make the older brothers appear tame. Fortunately, I've got another year before I have to put up with those two."

"It's good to know that our legacy lives on," Sirius chuckled. "We wouldn't want your life to get dull, Professor, would we?"

"The hardest part of my job is keeping a strait face when a particularly clever prank is revealed," McGonagall chuckled. "It's even harder considering my own tenure as a student."

"What do you mean?"

"It would seem that you Marauders and the Weasley clan are following my legacy as a student."

"Really? I would never have guessed."

"Tis true. As a student I gave Dumbledore and Headmaster Dippet fits as well!"

"We may well have to compare notes sometime."

"Looking forward to it."



“So is that why they say you’re barking,” Hermione asked, “‘cause you pranked people?” Her arms were crossed against her chest. Hermione Granger did not think too highly about pranks having been the victim of far too many already in her short life.

“No, Hermione,” Sirius said softly. “They are worried about the effects of six and a half years in Azkaban and, to be honest, you can’t blame them for being concerned.”

“Why?” Harry asked.

Sirius sighed and the joy in his eyes faded. “If there is truly a hell on Earth, Azkaban is it. From the day I entered until the day they sent me here, I almost never left my cell. I seldom had visitors, and all of them were cops questioning me about Death Eaters, as if I knew. The human guards only showed up to deliver food, collect the dirty dishes and I guess to remove corpses from the other cells. The real guards are not even human.”

“What are they?” Clarice asked.

“They are called Dementors. Apt name really. I’m not sure what they really are. Beings? Demons? They are certainly horrible.

“Dementors are not truly alive. They look like - well Death, black cloaks, Black hoods, no faces, skeletons for hands. Horrible. They feed off of emotions, particularly any positive ones. When they are around, all happy memories and feelings are lost to you and you are left with only your most painful of memories and emotions. Most prisoners either die from despair or go insane.

“But you didn’t?”

Sirius shook his head. “Don’t think so.”

“Assuming he was sane to begin with,” Remus chided.

“Why? How?” Harry asked.



“Two reasons, near as I can figure,” Sirius said. “First off, I knew I was innocent and I knew I had been framed. That’s not a happy thought and as it was the one most on my mind when I was available, it suppressed those thoughts that Dementors prefer. The second reason ... do you know what an Animagus is, Harry?”

Harry nodded. “It’s a witch or wizard that can turn themselves into an animal. ‘Aunt’ Minnie can turn into a cat.”

“And,” Hermione added, “it’s one of the things they are going to try and teach us this summer. I’m really looking forward to...” Hermione stopped talking as she and the others watched Sirius transform into a large, black Irish Wolfhound. The dog then began licking Hermione’s face and she began to squeal. Harry and Clarice laughed, only to get licked as well before the dog transformed back into Sirius.

“Gross!” Hermione complained.

“You’re an animagus!” Harry said.

“An unregistered one, no doubt,” McGonagall added.

“But how does that help? How’d you become one?”

“As a dog, I still think like a human and can remember like one, but my emotions are that of a dog. Dementors have no effect on animals. Basically, the only time I was human was when the human guards were around. Once I sensed the Dementors, I was a dog again. They had no effect on me whatsoever. Being a dog had another advantage as that place is bloody cold all the time. I only wish I had access to flea powder.”

“That explains a lot,” McGonagall noted.

“How’d you become one?” Harry asked. “Why?”

“How is complex. As for why, aside from the fact it’s pretty cool, my friends and I became animagi our Fifth Year to help our friend Remus here.”



“What do you mean?”

“Your father, a boy named Peter Pettigrew and I became animangi out of concern for our friend Remus. He has a condition where he becomes a right nasty beast one night each month. He can be dangerous to humans at that time unless precautions are taken. But, he’s harmless to animals. We became animangi to keep him company and our Marauder names were based upon the forms we too. I am Padfoot. Your father was Prongs as his form was a brilliant Stag. Peter was Wormtail as he was a rat - in more ways than one come to think of it.”

“Are you an animangus too, Mr. Lupin?” Hermione asked.

“No. I can’t be one even if I wanted to.”

“Did you have a Marauder name?” Harry asked.

“Moony.”

Hermione’s eyes went wide and she gasped! “You’re a werewolf, aren’t you?”

“Don’t be silly, dear,” Rose Granger scolded.

“What makes you think that?” Remus asked the girl.

“Until a few weeks ago, magic was fake,” Hermione said. “It was fantasy and all that. Then I learn it’s real and I am a witch and I see it’s real. Fantasy is just non-magical myth and legend. But all legends have at their heart a grain of truth, yes?”

“You have a problem that comes about once a month, right? When you have that problem, you’re not truly human, right? Your friends chose to become animals so they could be with you when it happened as you were dangerous to humans but not animals. Your Marauder names is Moony, as in Moon. Even in Non-magical lore, we know of werewolves. Once a month, when the moon is full, you change into a beast. Am I right?”



"You are a bright one," Remus said, "and you are right. I am indeed a werewolf."

"But you seem like a decent man," Rose protested.

"Mum," Hermione said, "what makes you think his condition makes him evil? He is dangerous one night a month. But what about the rest?"

"Still," Rose began.

"She has a point, Mrs. Granger," McGonagall said. "Most Weres are responsible people and secret themselves away on the days of a full moon. They are harmless because they separate themselves from the temptations of their beast natures. The ones that made legend are the ones who are evil all the time. There are a handful who are. They taint the ones like Remus here who are not."

"Bloody Ministry doesn't even consider him truly human," Sirius growled.

"That's insane!" Hermione protested.

"Indeed it is," Sirius agreed. "James and I figured out about our friend's 'little furry problem' early on. Lily - your Mum - figured it out too. James and I were there a few times as humans when he transformed and while he was wicked scary, he never attacked us."

"I could still sense they were friends," Lupin said. "Others might not have been so lucky had I not been contained and isolated."

"As humans, we could not stick around," Sirius said. "Moony here would get increasingly agitated in his Were form. His human side kept him from attacking, but it was excruciatingly painful for him to hold back. Only Lily could sit with him in human form and not get his beast riled. As animangi, we could spend the time with him, let him out of his prison as it were and run the countryside. We could keep him away from human prey and prevent him from injuring himself, which is what would happen when he remained sequestered."



“So you broke the law to help your friend?” McGonagall asked.

“Yes. It was the right thing to do.”

She nodded.

“An unjust law is no law at all,” Robert Granger said. “Long ago it was so written. We are all under a moral obligation to obey no unjust law and to resist such laws at all cost.”

“It seems to me that that’s what should have happened before when my parents died,” Harry said. “I mean the more we learn about the magical world the worse it seems. Someone should have made it better, not worse. I want to think that’s what they died for: to make the world a better place. I know that’s what’s worth fighting for. Anything less is not worth nothing. Sensei has suggested as much and I now agree. The world can have no birthrights. You rise or fall because of who you are, not who your parents were.”

“Bloody hell,” Sirius said.

“Sensei told us what the current system led to,” Harry said. “It led to the extermination of the entire human race. The current system is elitist. It’s not democratic. The people have no say in their rulers. That must end. It may take years to change things and no one’s gonna listen to a kid, but I want it to change. Its current form must die and a better form for all mankind must rise from the ashes. I hereby dedicate my life to the betterment of all mankind and to the destruction of all ideas that say one person should lord over another solely by virtue of their birth!”

“Me too!” Hermione exclaimed.

“Me too!” Clarice added.

“You sure you’re only seven, Harry?” Robert Granger asked.

“I am,” Harry replied.

“Well, count me in and I want to help.”



"Me too," Rose added.

"Damn Cub," Sirius said, "I never expected that! Wow! Prank the World!"

"Wow is an understatement," Remus added.

"You sure don't do normal," McGonagall said. "So when does this revolution really start?"

"Can't say," Harry said, "don't know. I just think it needs to."

"We're with you Harry," Hermione said.

"I don't want you with me, I want us with us."

"What do you mean?"

"I'm not wanting to be a leader or nothing. I just think this is a good idea."

"It is, Harry," Remus said. "And we don't expect you to lead anytime soon. But, don't think you can't."

"I..." Harry began.

"Don't think you can't until you've tried and proven it so," Sirius said.

"Okay, I guess."



## CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE: OFFICE W

Harry and the others spent a significant amount of time with Sirius that Saturday. What puzzled Harry was that Sensei had not made an appearance at all. He always had before. It was not until Harry and the others returned home that Sensei finally decided to appear.

Harry asked why he had remained invisible and Sensei said he needed a little time. Sirius had been very important to Sensei in the prior time line and Sensei had lost Sirius at a particularly hard time in his life. Even after a century and a half, the pain of that loss was still there. He assured Harry that the loss he suffered would not occur now. Sirius was a wanted fugitive who had escaped from Azkaban the entire time Sensei had known him. He was in hiding the whole time and Sensei believed that this was a factor in his Sirius's untimely demise.

Harry's Sirius was a free man and would not be cut off from Harry or the rest of the world. This, Sensei believed, was important as the events in his timeline could not occur in this one. Sensei believed that this new Sirius would be much happier than the one he knew and would be much closer to Harry and the others. Part of the reason Sensei lost his Sirius was because of an incident where they had a slight falling out and Sensei decided not to confide in Sirius for a time. Had that not happened, things may well have been different.

Sensei also told the others that he would appear when Sirius was around one day. But he felt that it should wait until after Sirius was out of the hospital. Sensei appeared to Harry in hospital because he was in this timeline for Harry. While he hoped to help Harry set some things right that were unrelated to the broader future, it was the broader future that was important. Harry could tell Sirius about Sensei, but should leave out any significant details for now, such as being from the future or trying to change it.

"Just say I'm an old retired professor and wizard who's taken to liking you and Hermione and Clarice and want to teach you what I can, okay? When he's out of the hospital, I will make my introduction, provided of course that he can see me. But I don't think that will be a problem."



After checking the children's mental exercises and giving them more to work on, Sensei's Sunday lecture was more on wizarding society in Britain. In particular, he spoke about witches in society and what he said offended Hermione and Clarice. Witches were generally second class citizens. They had rights, but without money of their own or a wizard patron such as a father or husband, they did not generally have the same opportunities as wizards. This was particularly true in government. Advancement was by patronage as much as it was by ability if not more so. Few witches rose to significant posts in the Ministry, the current Minister for Magic and Head of Magical Law Enforcement being notable exceptions. Magical Britain was not quite centuries behind non-magical Britain. In fact, centuries ago its attitudes towards women, which had not ever changed, were far more progressive than in the rest of Britain. The key criticism was the attitudes remained unchanged and now there was a noticeable disparity.

This led to a discussion of magical marriages. It shocked the group to learn that arranged marriages were still common place, particularly with the Pureblood Elitists. It shocked the Grangers as to how young a couple could be and still legally marry, provided they had the consent of their magical guardians. Thirteen was far too young, the Grangers felt. Harry and Hermione quietly agreed. What really incensed Hermione was that the arranged marriages almost always were financial transactions. The marriages were arranged for either political or financial gain. The grooms family typically paid the bride's for their daughter's hand. Wizard boys were assets because they were heirs and had opportunities. Witches were assets to their family's because they could bring a dowry.

Sensei stressed that this custom was mostly restricted to the Noble Houses and even then, not all houses followed it. The Potters in particular did not. For generations, each male potter tended to marry for love and not money or gain. In many cases, the bride was a Muggle Born. Harry's father was deemed a pure blood only because of a historical fluke as his mother through his great-great grandmother were not Muggle Borns. His Great-grandmother Dorea Black was the only arranged marriage in his line in fifteen generations.



Still, the practice existed. It's existence was one of many factors that marginalized women and was something that would have to change in the future. Any attitude that treated a person differently because of what they were born as opposed to what they could accomplish perpetuated the bigotry and hatred that had led to the horrible future wars.

It was also shocking to learn that, under certain exceptional circumstances, a wizard could take more than one wife. The primary exceptions were where the wizard by inheritance or will was the last male Head of more than one Noble House. Under those circumstances, he was allowed one wife per house so that each wife could produce an undisputed heir. Sensei stressed that this rarely ever occurred and even then, it was never required, just allowed.

One thing that had come out when they were visiting with Sirius was that Remus, largely due to his "little furry problem," was unemployed. Everyone felt that was wrong. True, during the full moon it might not be advisable for him to be working around other people, but the rest of the time he was safe. The Grangers had a talk after the children went to sleep that Saturday night. Sunday afternoon, after Sensei's "class," the whole family returned to St. Mungo's to visit Sirius and the elder Grangers hoped that Remus would be there as well. He was.

The Grangers offered him a job. The wage was not great, but it was clearly the best offer he had had in a long time. He would act as mentor and a supervisor for the children during the week. Four days a week, while the children were home, he would look after them and make sure they didn't burn the house down while the elder Grangers attended to their Dental practice. Wednesdays and weekends he could take off, but he was not uninvited during those days. The Grangers said that the children needed to learn about their world and that meant they needed a witch or wizard to guide them. Remus leapt at the opportunity.

Of course, he and Sirius did learn of the Granger's summer plans. They learned that the children would spend most of July at a magical school in Japan and were told what they would learn there.



“Wait a tic,” Sirius interrupted, “you’re telling us these three will have completed their O.W.L.s by the end of this summer?”

“Yes,” Robert said. “That’s what Minnie told us. O.W.L.s this summer, N.E.W.T.s next summer, Masters Certifications the summers after that, not to mention university degrees.”

“Why?”

“Because we can. As parents, it’s our job to provide the best for our children and everything we’ve been told, we’ve read and we’ve learned suggests this is the best and most comprehensive education we can possibly provide for them.”

“What about Hogwarts? What about meeting other children like them from around here?”

“Hogwarts is years away. As we understand it, most magical children in magical families are home schooled until they are accepted to magical secondary school, right?”

Sirius nodded.

“Well, we’ve already met a family called the Weasleys and with your help, we can figure out how to get them together. Likewise, you may know of others. Most important, as I understand it magic travel is faster than non-magic at least in Britain. The Weasleys live in Devon which is hours from our place in Essex. Having a wizard should help these kids meet children like themselves.”

So it was generally agreed that for the foreseeable future, Remus would act as their guide and mentor while after Sirius got out of hospital, he would do whatever it was godfathers did. It was understood they probably would be seeing a lot of Sirius Black for a time, although Sirius did say he was hoping to return to his job as an Auror, well Auror-in-Training. He did not need the money, but he had a need to be useful again. The one benefit to having both Sirius and Remus in their lives was that Harry and Clarice would learn all about their parents and the Potter family. Remus also promised Hermione that he and McGonagall would do the same for her.



Monday arrived and Remus arrived just before breakfast. Harry and Clarice had completed their assignments and were officially done with school. Hermione, on the other hand, still had a week of class left. She left for school with her parents and Remus and the other children spent the day together. In the afternoon, they went to visit Sirius again and Remus introduced the children to Apparition, a form of magical transportation. Hermione was quite jealous to learn of that when she finally got home, so Remus took her to Diagon Alley to buy a (as in one) book to demonstrate apparition to her. The three children were convinced that they loved magic.

TUESDAY - JUNE 21, 1988 - THAMES HOUSE, LONDON, U.K.

Roger Grant picked up the phone on his desk and pressed a couple of numbers.

“Vi? Get Evans and Greengrass in here, as soon as possible.”

She told him she would and Roger returned to the Potter file on his desk. What had alarmed him was the recent updates that indicated the kid was set to leave the country. A passport and Visa application had been processed through the Foreign Ministry in seeming record time for one Harry James Potter of 16 Willow Way, Loughton Essex. In addition, Visas had also been fast tracked for Hermione Granger and Clarice Jameson as they already had passports. They were all student Visas and what little information that was in the file indicated that they were heading to Japan for a month and then to the States.

Equally intriguing was the fact that at the same time as Potter's application sped through the usually glacially slow Foreign Ministry, another did as well. It was for one Minerva McGonagall. McGonagall was known to Office W and there was quite a dossier on the woman. She was not considered a threat, far from it, but she was considered a person of some importance in the magical world and therefore a person of interest to Office W who also were trying to get a better picture of this parallel Britain. McGonagall was Deputy Headmistress of Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry which was said to be somewhere in Scotland. Hogwarts was the oldest and most prestigious school of magic in the British Isles, moreover it was



headed by one Albus Dumbledore who was another person of interest to Office W.

The McGonagall dossier showed that she was a very independent woman. She clearly was not a supporter or sympathizer with the terrorists, yet neither was she a known supporter of the Ministry of Magic. She had been highly critical of the Ministry for years. Also of interest to Roger Grant was the fact that despite being Dumbledore's Deputy, she was not on any list in Office W of witches and wizards thought to be affiliated with Dumbledore's Order of the Phoenix. In Grant's mind this meant two things: first, she was a first class educator and loyal to her school, and second, she was not personally loyal to Dumbledore. While the children might be too young for potential recruitment, McGonagall was not.

What had Grant thinking along those lines was information that the three children and McGonagall were booked on the same British Airways flight to Osaka, Japan departing June 28th. Why would a witch need to fly on an airplane? It was obvious to Grant she was escorting the children to wherever they were going. The children's return flight would be on July 30th. McGonagall would return to Britain July 3rd and return to Japan along with the Grangers July 28th apparently to escort the children home. What interest were these children to her? Surely, a woman of her station had better things to do than escort children who were too young to even know about magic, much less attend her school.

It made no sense to Roger Grant and he wanted answers - yesterday! A knock on his door brought him back from his contemplations.

"Enter!" he barked. The door opened and Agents Evans and Greengrass entered his office. "You two see the info from Foreign on Potter?"

The two men nodded.

"Any thoughts?"



"As to the children? Not really," Michael Evans said. "They are going to Japan for some reason, but I doubt it's of much concern."

"The interesting information is on their minder," Greengrass added.

"My thoughts exactly," Grant said. "Something of interest is up, wouldn't you two agree?"

The two men nodded.

"You would agree that this is probably not a threat to the internal security of the realm?" Grant asked.

"Yes Sir, it probably is not," Evans said. "But now that we have a tab on Potter, almost anything involving him is of interest to Her Majesty's Government."

"The lad had something to do with the take down of the Death Eater terrorists back in '81 and '82," Greengrass added. "As a small child, he somehow defeated their leader. Don't ask me how. No one knows how. At least no one who's talking and in a position to know. The uproar over his death, as short lived as it was, was an indication of his continued importance to the magicals."

"Any ideas as to why it was short lived?"

"Wards," Greengrass replied.

Granted nodded. He knew a lot about wards. As a non-magical, he could not make them, but Office W had a whole reference library on many magical subjects and warding was of keen interest. They had developed technologies that could defeat certain kinds of wards during the last war which was one of the reasons why they had been so effective at killing Death Eaters.

"Any idea what kind?"

"No sir. Nothing in our database explains the specific aspects we have observed. But, the phenomenon is best explained by some kind of ward that protects the kid."



“Would it stop us?”

“I can’t say. It might. It probably would stop me if I intended to do harm. Might stop me regardless.”

Grant nodded. “You two think now might be a good time to get to know this Potter a little better?”

“Um...”

“Mike, he is after all, your nephew.”

Evans nodded. “That might serve as an excuse. You suggest overt or covert contact?”

“Use your discretion. Just make sure they know they are not targets of a Security Service investigation. And be discreet. I don’t want our colleagues in MI-6 thinking this overseas trip gives them jurisdiction.”

“Yes sir.”

“And make it soon! Preferably before the lot of them leave the country.”

“Yes Sir!” The two men then realized they had been dismissed and left their boss’s office.

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 22, 1988 - OUTSIDE 16 WILLOW WAY, LOUGHTON, ESSEX, U.K.

In the lightening just before dawn, the door to a non-descript van opened and a man entered. The van looked to an outsider to be a company vehicle used by some telecommunications company, complete with extension ladders stored on top and a company logo emblazoned on the side advertising its purpose and ownership. The reality was far different. The van was a surveillance vehicle complete with visual, night vision and infra-red cameras and various methods of detecting electronic communications. It also had gadgets that most similar vehicles would not have. It had magic detectors.



The van belonged to Office W of the State Security Service, more commonly known as MI-5 and was parked with a clear view of the house of interest, the residence of one Dr. Robert and Dr. Rose Granger and their adopted and foster children.

“So?” Mike Evans asked.

“Powerful wards,” David Greengrass replied. “Never seen the like to be honest. It’s a multi-layered defense with each layer being more dangerous to a potential attacker than the last. Fair bet if we meant the Grangers harm, I would probably be dead.”

“What kind of defenses?”

“Many of them appear standard, but none of them are. Truth is, this is new even to me. Outer protection extends approximately three hundred meters in every direction from the house. The first line is a version of an AF, AP and AA ward.” This was Office W jargon for Anti-Floo, Anti-Portkey and Anti-Apparition, three forms of near instantaneous magical transport. “But, they are not like any I’ve encountered before.”

“How so?”

“Well, they appear to be normal,” Dave said. “So one would assume that if you were to try and apparate or portkey into the perimeter, you’d bounce off quite violently. But, rather than a barrier, these wards are a shunt. Instead of bouncing off, you’ll find yourself coming out of transit up to two hundred miles away in any direction.”

“That means you could wind up in the Bay of Biscay or the Channel?”

“It’s possible.”

“Ouch.”

“Especially when one considers most magicals never learn to swim.”

“Anything else?”



“Well, standard AF, AP and AA’s are total. No one enters and no one leaves. These appear keyed. If someone is keyed into the warding scheme, the AF, AA and AP’s do not exist for them unless...”

“Unless?”

“There’s an intent ward at the outer boundary as well.

“What’s that?”

“Very rare, is what. If I was keyed in but intended harm to the protected location, the intent ward would cancel the key. Off I go for a swim. It would seem to protect the target from change in heart as well as any kind of compulsion charm. Basically, if you are not invited, good luck getting in the front door, as it were.”

“But you did?”

“In a van! Not with magic. Now, at two hundred meters there’s a form of anti-magic ward.”

“What’s that?”

“Typically, it’s a ward that prevents magic from being detected. Fair few Pureblood homes have something like that so children can get around the Decree for Reasonably Restrictions on Underage Sorcery. The ones here are far more powerful. Not only can no magic be detected, magic cannot get in and offensive magic will not work unless the attacker is both keyed into the wards and defending the protected target. Basically, I cannot use magic here unless I am keyed into the wards. Moreover, if I was carrying a wand or any other magical object that might threaten the target, I couldn’t get past that ward at all.”

“And magical creatures?”

“Not even a Dementor can cross that line and survive.”

“Bloody hell! Guess it’s a good thing you’re not magically armed.”



Agent Greengrass shrugged. "Just don't be surprised if when we leave I have no memory of our time here."

"Why?"

"At one hundred meters, there is a memory ward. It will wipe the memory of any unwanted guests should they ever manage to leave. Again, as I have no wand, it has not affected me yet. Were I so armed, I am sure I would now be totally clueless. Moreover, it is that ward which I believe has effectively erased the name Harry Potter from the minds of most of my world. I don't know why I am unaffected, but my wife and daughters are. I guess it is because I have chosen to serve Her Majesty and the Muggles over magic. But that's only a guess."

"Is there more?" Mike asked.

"Inside one hundred meters, the defenses get down right nasty."

"And they're not already?"

"I could live to make it to that line. I would give up my wand, my memory and my ability to flee magically, but I could advance on the target. Across that line, the wards are far less merciful. Suffices to say, a magical enemy cannot cross the threshold of that house and live to assail those within and under the protections. "

"So can we approach?"

"As Muggles?" David Greengrass said. "Yes. The wards do not stop and are not designed to stop Muggles. There's no Muggle Repelling Ward at all. But were I to approach as a wizard, wand in hand? You wouldn't want to be anywhere near me, Mike."

"So you've never encountered anything like this?"

"Neither Hogwarts nor Gringotts is so well protected. These wards are all but impregnable to an enemy of those within. There are not even warding stones! The easy way to defeat a geographically fixed



ward is to find the stones that mark its boundary. So far as I can tell, there are not any here. This magic is either unknown or so ancient as to be forgotten to men, goblins and elves.”

“I take it you’re impressed?”

“I’d love to pick the brain of the warder. I fear, however, it is Dumbledore. Whether he intended this is another question altogether.”

Mike nodded. To Office W of MI-5, magical and non-magical alike, Dumbledore was more like Neville Chamberlain than Winston Churchill. He had argued restraint in the last war and as a result thousands died. Were it not for the secret efforts of MI-5, thousands more would have perished as the legitimate magical government was reluctant to fight to win, as in shoot to kill. Their enemies (and MI-5) were not so squeamish.

Two loud cracks broke the pensiveness in the van. The two men bent towards their cameras and began scanning. There were two people nearing the door to the target house who had been nowhere in sight moments before.

“Apparition?” Mike asked.

“Probable,” David replied. “I have to assume these two are keyed into the wards. Oh my!”

“What?”

“Don’t recognize the bloke, but the woman is none other than Minerva McGonagall!”

“Bloke’s probably an ‘M.’” Mike said.

Dave nodded in agreement.

“Door!”



The two looked as the front door to the home opened even before the couple had reached it. A man they knew as Dr. Robert Granger and a girl they knew as his daughter Hermione stepped out and greeted the couple briefly before continuing to the BMW in the drive and getting in and driving away. The other two entered the house.

"Guess they're rather chummy," Mike noted.

"Where do we go from here, boss?" David asked.

Michael Evans thought about it for a moment. "Give them a few minutes to get comfy. Then you and I will have a meet with my niece and nephew in a semi-official capacity," he said with a chuckle.

"Boss?"

"Ring the door, flash the ID and say we need to talk to the boy and girl. 'Tis true to an extent."

"It is, but why?"

"You think the rest of that lot will let me meet my niece and nephew in private? Especially after what that waste of my half-sister and her family did to the boy? Follow my lead. Act natural. This could be a banner day for Office W!"

Several minutes later, the two men left their van and walked towards the front door of the house they had been observing. David Greengrass alighted from the van fearing the inevitable. The wards were instant death or worse for any wizard who meant the occupants harm. He did not, but he was hardly there as a friend either. Each step where he retained his magic, memory and pulse made him relax, but only a little. There were a witch and wizard in the house and he'd bet the van that they had wands. He and his partner were unarmed. He watched as his partner rang the bell.

They knew who the woman was who opened the door.

"Rose Granger, I presume?" Mike asked.



She nodded.

Evans held up his MI-5 credentials. "Agent Michael Evans, State Security Service, Ma'am. This is my partner, Agent Greengrass. We are here about the events at Little Whinging, Surrey involving one Harry Potter. Is he here?"

The woman nodded.

"We also need to speak with one Clarice Jameson about another event we believe may be related. Is she here?"

"She is. They are. But if you think we'll turn them over..."

"That is not our intention, Ma'am. Just some questions and we'll be off. May be nothing. Then again, any information at this juncture is appreciated. Can we come in?"

The woman nodded curtly and ushered the two men into a large parlor. "They're changing," she said. "Can I offer you some tea?"

"That would be lovely, Ma'am," David Greengrass said, "Thank you." He had taken his boss's cue and decided to be as non-threatening as possible. Several minutes later, she returned with a tea service. As the tea was being poured, two children entered along with the two adults they observed earlier.

"Professor McGonagall," David Greengrass said, "it has been a while."

The older woman looked at him in confusion. "I am afraid you have me at a disadvantage, Sir," she replied.

"David Greengrass, Slytherin Class of '73. It's been a while since I was your student."

"But you're MI-5?"

"Indeed. When I left Hogwarts I became an Auror. But neither the Ministry of Magic nor anyone else seemed to see that there was a



war on with Voldemort and his terrorists. My loyalty is with Great Britain and her Majesty the Queen. At least we stood and fought!"

"And all but won," Michael Evans said. "Fair few magicals bolted to Her Majesty's Service during the war. We are from Office W. Those of us who are not magical knew of your world before joining. My wife is a witch and so was one of my two half sisters. I my wife and I have eight children, all magical. Two are out of school and working, three are in school and my three youngest are not. My two youngest are about the same age as your children here."

"Why are you here?" Harry asked. "Are you going to take us away from the Grangers?"

"No Harry. We have neither the desire nor the authority to do that. We are here because Her Majesty's government cares about all her subjects, magical included and wants to foster better relations with your world. I am here because this particular meeting is of personal interest to me."

"How so?" McGonagall asked.

"Harry and Clarice are my nephew and niece," Michael Evans said. "Or half nephew and niece." He saw Harry pale with fear. He knew why. "Harry," Michael said softly, "I am not Petunia. I never liked her. She hated magic for some reason and refused it. I married a witch and all my children are like you. I cannot fear nor hate you for your gift. I live with your gift all the time. My other half-sister was your Mum. I'll admit I knew neither well. I was nineteen when your Mum was born."

"My father was your grandfather. I was born in '41 during the War. My Dad was flying with the R.A.F. at the time. He was a fighter pilot. My Mum was killed in late 1944 when the Germans began launching rockets at London. I was away with family at the time. A rocket hit our home dead on and killed my Mum. Dad married years later and your Aunt Petunia and Mum were his children from that marriage."

"Dad never had an issue with magic and I most certainly do not. The Evans is on again, off again magical and has been for a long, long



time. Your Aunt Petunia was - well, she was a disappointment in so many ways. Why she married that cretin Dursley is beyond me. I was at their wedding and the fat bastard assumed I hated magic as much as he did. Made some off color remarks about it and I felt I had no choice but to rearrange his face right there at the reception. Broke the bastards nose and arm in the end."

"Did the world a small service," the unknown wizard said.

"Not enough of one," Mike Evans said. "Should have killed the git! From what I've read about Harry's life until recently..."

"Why didn't you," Harry began...

Mike knew the question was why didn't he take Harry. "Son," he said, "I was a lot older than your mother. I seldom met your Mum. I liked her, but did not really know her. Never liked Petunia. She was always a piece of work.

"Petunia was a bright girl, but never applied herself. She assumed things would come her way without effort. She could have gone on to university had she tried, but she did not. She had issues and those issues led her to that fat bastard Dursley.

"Your Mum was at least as smart as her sister, but worked for everything she could achieve. They were both very smart, but very different. At least, that is what I remember. Your Mum was her father's daughter. Your aunt was her mother's. My Dad was all about earning your place. My step-mum was all about marrying it.

"I met your Mum three times. The first time was when she was ten. The last time was at her wedding. My Dad remarried years after my Mum was killed and I never got along with your grandmum so I stayed away. At your Mum's wedding, I had the misfortune to run into my sister Petunia. She had the sense to leave that fat git husband of hers behind. By then, I was married to a witch and when she found out she told me in no uncertain terms that I and my freak family were not welcome in her home. Had I known you had been placed with them, I probably would have petitioned for custody or something."



“Oh.”

“Can I ask you something Harry?”

Harry nodded.

“Are you happy here with the Grangers?”

“Yes.”

“Would you mind if your uncle came to visit you and your sister from time to time?”

The boy began to cry. Mrs. Granger knelt down and pulled the poor boy into a hug as he cried. This was one of so many new experiences to Harry since the Grangers had come into his life. It took him a while to calm down. When he did, he looked at his long lost uncle and said. “I’m sorry. It’s just...”

“No worries, Harry,” Mr. Evans said soothingly.

“F-for as long as I can remember, I thought no one loved me. No one could love me! I was a freak and didn’t deserve to be liked by anyone. Until I woke up in hospital, I never had a hug and my family was never nice to me. I thought I deserved that for some reason. Now, ever since I woke up it’s like all that was a dream. I’m still getting used to this. I’m still getting used to the idea that I can be liked and loved. I’m sorry.”

“It’s okay, Harry.”

“I would like to get to know what’s left of my real family, Uncle - er ...”

“Mike,” Evans said. “You and Clarice can call me Uncle Mike.”

“Now I have a few questions for you, Mr. Evans,” McGonagall said. “You say you’re from MI-5? That’s part of the Muggle government, yes?”



"It is."

"Yet you know about magic and your office fights against it?"

"That is a grossly oversimplified statement of what we do," he answered. "What is now Office W was established back in the 1920's. A similar office was set up in what became MI-6 or the Secret Intelligence Service. They were set up for the same reason - Gellert Grindewald. He was a nasty wizard on the continent and was bent on conquest, at least of the magical world. MI-6 types fought against him. My office was tasked with keeping an eye on the British magicals and preventing Grindewald from exporting his war across the Channel. We like to think we did a pretty good job of it. We've always been staffed with people like me: non-magicals who know about magic and people like David here: magicals loyal to Her Majesty and the British Empire. One thing we learned during that was the importance of keeping an eye on the Magical world.

"We don't consider magic itself a threat and I think it's fair to say that the vast majority of magicals are law abiding subjects. But, there are always a few who are not, just like in our world. MI-5 is tasked with ensuring the internal security of Britain. We conduct counter-espionage operations, we are the intelligence arm in ongoing counter-terrorism activities here at home and we are also tasked with certain law enforcement and surveillance activities.

"Office W does everything MI-5 does, but our focus is on magical threats and trying to establish a relationship within your world. I regret, while we are good at keeping tabs on and dealing with threats as they arise, we have never had much success in establishing close contacts within the magical world, much less any kind of working relationship with your government. Were it not for the witches and wizards in our ranks and families, we would have little or no contact at all."

"Is this a social call or business?" McGonagall asked.

"A little of both."

"Both?" all three adults asked in unison.



Mike Evans nodded. "Oh, where to begin. Right then..."

"One person of interest is Dr. Robert Granger."

"Why?" Rose asked in horror.

"Nothing to fear, Ma'am. Years ago then Captain Granger was a team leader in two-two squadron of the S.A.S. He led a raid against a Death Eater stronghold. It was very successful. Bagged over forty magical terrorists that night."

"Bagged?"

"Killed," Evans deadpanned. "Your last war was a source of frustration for Her Majesty's government. It seemed your world was not interested in winning it. As it was spilling over into the population at large, we classified Death Eaters as terrorists and threats to National Security and moved to deal with them directly. Ninety percent of the Death Eaters killed in that war were killed by us and not by you."

"That's why I joined up," David added. "As an Auror, my hands were tied. The Death Eaters could kill, we could not. Because of the magical government's Pureblood alignment, we were not authorized lethal force for fear we might kill some scion of a noble house. It was a bloody civil war for Merlin's sake! Killing the odd scion was necessary if we wanted to win! MI-5 saw it that way and were it not for us, the bastards might actually have won."

"They almost did," McGonagall said. "They were close."

"Not as close as you or they think," Mike Evans said. "What was close was a massive intervention by Her Majesty's forces. Had your Ministry fallen to the terrorists, we would have intervened militarily. It may have been bloody, but there are more soldiers in the British Army than there are witches and wizards in the British Isles. It would have gone quite badly for the magical world. Then, Harry happened."

Harry looked surprised.



"You do know most magicals believed you defeated Voldemort?"

Harry nodded.

"Apparently, our intel on him was accurate. Cut off the head of that organization and it collapsed. Harry, of course, has been a person of interest to MI-5 ever since. We don't know how he did what he said to have done."

"No one does," McGonagall said.

"Still," David picked up, "he's been of interest ever since. Then again, until recently no one knew where he was. And had Mike here bothered to check on his sister..."

"I had no cause to," Mike protested, "and if you ever met her and her husband, you would not want to see them ever again."

"Basically, Harry Potter became a cold case," David said. "That is until about a month ago."

"The fire?" McGonagall asked.

Mike and David nodded. "We would have stopped by for a chat anyway, but what piqued our curiosity were the two other children who lived here. After we learned that the Grangers had taken Harry into foster care in record time, we found out about Hermione and Clarice. They are magicals."

"How did you know that?" McGonagall asked.

"Because their birth certificates on record are what we call M-forges."

"What's that?" Rose asked.

"An M-forge document is a legally valid forgery prepared by Gringotts for people from the magical world who need documentation in the non-magical world. They hide the specifics of magic from us lowly non-magical types. We at Office W, however, know what they are."



"We became curious. The odds of the Grangers here having three magical children or even two placed in their care are long, to say the least. Then there's the recent business."

"What do you mean?" Rose asked.

"Within the last week or so, two M-Forge passports and four M-forge Visas were issued to this address. While we really are not concerned with your upcoming trip to Japan, we are curious as to why Professor Minerva McGonagall is part of the party. It was not expected. After all, she is the Deputy Headmistress of Hogwarts. What interest are these three to her? And if she knows about Harry here, why is that not public knowledge?"

"Then there are the wards surrounding this house," David added.  
"Very curious."

"Well, if you must know," McGonagall said, "I happen to be Hermione's maternal Great-grandmother so this is all that is left of my family. I also happen to be Harry and Clarice's magical guardian. So, I am going to accompany them on their trip to Japan."

"Where they will stay for a month yet you will return?"

"They are attending a magical school there."

"Interesting. I didn't think you could send children so young to magical school."

"Not here in Britain," McGonagall said. "Nor elsewhere in Europe. But in Asia and the Americas, you can send them at age six."

"And they get their wands at that time?"

McGonagall nodded.

"Wands than cannot be traced by your Ministry?"

"How...? what do you mean?"



“Despite what your people are told, the Ministry cannot really detect magic, underage or otherwise, unless it is exceedingly powerful. They can, however, detect a wand’s signature provided it’s on record with the Ministry. All wands sold in Britain or passing through magical customs must be registered. But you are going Muggle. It means your foreign bought wands will not pass through Ministry scrutiny which means they cannot be detected.”

“That cunning old bastard!” McGonagall laughed.

“Who?” David asked, “Dumbledore?”

“I can assure you, Sir, Dumbledore would prefer it if he could track Harry! He has it in for the boy for some reason. No, there is another who wants Harry to be able to make his own way in this world without undue interference from those who seek to control him, namely Dumbledore and the Ministry. Each, of course, for their own selfish reasons none of which have to do with Harry’s best interests or well being.”

“Why would the Ministry or Dumbledore want to control a seven year old boy?” Mike asked. “Seems rather pointless to me.”

“I am certain the current Minister has little more than a passing interest in the boy,” McGonagall said. “Bagnold has a fairly high popularity rating. There are others, however, who would love to gain control over him for their own ends. The Potter seat on the Wizengamot controls more votes than any other House. Throw in the fact that he is the famous ‘Boy-Who-Lived’ and that could mean serious political gains to whomever managed to gain control.”

“Such as?”

“Fudge.”

Remus laughed. “That fraud? He’s nothing more than the head of the Department for Regulation and Control of Magical Creatures. What bloody good would Harry serve?”



"It's well known he aspires to higher things, Remus."

"Just what I need! Fudge with more power!"

"And don't forget Barty Crouch," McGonagall added. "He was well on his way to becoming Minister for Magic one day when it turned out his son was a Death Eater. Head of Magical Law Enforcement has traditionally been a stepping stone to that office and he was the head. When his son and the Lestranges tortured the Longbottoms not long after Harry encountered You-Know-Who, Crouch lost all credibility and was reassigned to the Department of International Cooperation which, as you know Remus, is a political dead end."

"Great! One has been and one never will be!"

"Let's just hope Millie does not desire to retire anytime soon. She tends to be above such posturing."

"I take it you don't have much of an opinion as to Crouch or Fudge," Mike asked Remus. "Mr.?"

"Lupin," Remus said, "Remus Lupin. And no I don't. When he was head of Magical Law Enforcement, he and Dumbledore saw to it that my friend Sirius Black - Harry and Clarice's godfather - was sent to prison without trial for a crime he did not commit. As for Fudge, let's just say his office should be renamed the Department for the Eradication of Intelligent, Magical Creatures."

"What do you mean?" Mike asked.

"When Sirius Black, James and Lily Potter and I finished Hogwarts in '78, there was a war on against the Death Eaters. We all joined the Order of the Phoenix as well as the Auror Corps. Lily had to drop out when she became pregnant with Harry here. James left when Dumbledore sent him and his wife into hiding. Sirius and I stayed with it and, as it was war time, we finished our abbreviated training in July of 1980.

"We were supposedly up and comers in the Department. We were both protégés of Alastor Moody, probably one of the best combat



Auror's ever. November of '81, Crouch saw to it we lost Sirius as he had an Auror and Harry's godfather sent off to Azkaban without a trial even though it was impossible for Sirius to have committed the crime alleged."

"And what was that crime," Mike asked.

"When Voldemort murdered Harry and Clarice's parents, Sirius knew who had betrayed them. Everyone, including me, thought that Sirius was the Potter's Secret Keeper and therefore through the magic of the wards cast to hide the Potters, the only person who could betray them. At the last minute, Sirius refused. He suggested he become a decoy while someone whom nobody could ever suspect became the true Secret Keeper. That someone was Peter Pettigrew, a friend of our from school. What none of us knew until later was that Pettigrew was already an apprentice Death Eater.

"Anyway, not long after the attack occurred, Sirius was off after Pettigrew. He cornered the rat in a muggle market a few days later. Pettigrew faked his own death, killing a dozen Muggles at the same time and Crouch assumed the real mass murderer was Sirius. No trial. Everyone thought that, even me," Remus sniffed. "Sirius was my best friend. I knew he could not have done it, yet with James and Lily dead and Harry and Clarice missing, I believed the press.

"So I soldiered on in the Auror Corps for another three years and was promoted twice. Then Fudge became head of the Department for Regulation and Control of Magical Creatures. He rammed a bill through the Wizengamot making it illegal for someone like me to hold a job in magical Britain. Over the protests of my bosses and the new head of Magical Law Enforcement, I got the sack in early '85. Been working on the Muggle side in menial jobs ever since."

"Why were you sacked?" Mike and Harry asked in unison.

"Because I'm a werewolf."

"That hardly seems fair," Harry said. "You're not a monster."

"Thank you, Harry," Remus said softly. "That means a lot."



"Welcome," Harry said softly. "Why are people so mean?"

"I don't know, Harry. Some people just are."

"Werewolf, eh?" Mike said. "And a fully trained Auror?"

Remus nodded.

"Ever here of a Were named Fenir Greyback?"

"Met him once," Remus said darkly. "I was about Clarice's age when I did. He bit me and made me what I am. Why?"

"You have a job?"

"The Granger's hired me as a minder and tutor for their kids just recently. While they are home during the summer, I'll take care of them during the weekdays so the Doctors can go to work. Rose here said she'd take Wednesdays off, but I can still come over and help out. Why?"

"Grayback's the one mutt from Voldemort's terrorists we want," David said. "Killed a load of kids during the War and by our estimation the end of the War has not really stopped his predations. We want to find him and take him out permanently. Problem is, it's hard to find a Were who does not wish to be found, unless..."

"You use another Were to track him," Remus nodded.

"Can't make you any promises," Mike said, "but we've been trying to recruit a Were into Office W for decades. I'll need to talk to the Boss man, but here's my work number," Mike said handing Remus a card. "When the kids are off to Japan, give me a ring and we'll set up an interview. You would be an entry level field agent. Pays about 25,000 quid a year."

"That's far more than I've been making recently."

"You will have to pay Muggle taxes."



“Small price to pay to become an agent again.”

“You’re thinking of working with the Muggles,” McGonagall gasped.

“I am an Auror by trade. From what these two said, that’s what I’ll be again. I’ll just be catching Dark Wizards for Her Majesty rather than the Ministry. Besides, the pay is better than I was making as an Auror.”

“I crossed,” David said. “I’m a Pureblood and have been working for Her Majesty’s Security Service for thirteen years. I crossed because I wanted to work for a government interested in doing away with the Death Eaters. I have a wife and four daughters to worry about and I feel safer on the Muggle side than on the magical. The Muggles made a serious effort last time. The Ministry did not.”

“Four daughters?” Rose asked. “Are they witches?”

“Three are for certain. The fourth is still too young to be certain but probably is,” David said. “Daphne’s eight and our oldest. Astoria is six. Rene is four and Jessie is two. Why?”

“Well, Harry, Clarice and Hermione only recently learned about magic and about their true natures. For various reasons, they never really had friends before. Harry because of his home environment and Hermione and Clarice in part because of their magic. We went to Diagon Alley for a spot of shopping before going to visit Sirius Black - who’s been released and exonerated by the way - at St. Mungo’s. The kids met a magical family named the Weasley’s and my husband, Minnie and I have had talks since. We think it would be a good idea for them to meet with and maybe make friends with children around their age who are magical, and especially those from magical families.”

“I’ll talk to my better half,” David said. “Sounds like an idea. We are a Pureblood family, although due to my job our house has Muggle technology like television, computers and such. Still, we are hooked up to the Floo network and are warded.”



“Where do you live?”

“London.”

“May I offer a similar situation?” Mike asked. “Harry and Clarice have eight Evans cousins, all are magical. My oldest, Sharon is 21 and is a Healer at St. Mungos. Eddie is 19 and in the British Army. He’s going to be offered a position in Office W when his enlistment is up. Jason is 16, Amber 14 and Michelle 12. They are all students at St. George’s Academy of Magic here in London. Aaron is 10 and the twins - Cynthia and Billy are 8. They attend non-magical primary, but will transfer to St. George’s when they are 11, just like their Mum and older siblings. We also live in London and are more non-magical in life style than David’s family.”

“Would Hermione be invited?” Harry asked.

“You are my nephew, she is your family. Of course.”

“Please?” Clarice asked looking at Rose.

“I think this is a wonderful idea,” McGonagall said.

“I’ll talk to Robert about it later,” Rose said. “In any event, it will not be until we get back from America in August.”

“And what will you be doing in America?” Remus asked.

Rose was surprised it was not one of the Office W men.

“They’re taking the kids to Disney World,” Mike responded.

Rose gasped.

“Sorry, but Harry and the others are persons of interest.”



DISCLAIMER: That part of this world and those characters you've seen before belong to their Creator: JKR. The rest is mine - although I cannot quit my day job as I make no \$\$\$ from this...

A/N: For those who wonder how long this will be, below is my outline for the remainder of this book following this chapter: (These are not chapter titles - just main topics)

Ch. 25 going to Japan

Ch. 26 Japan Summer 1988

Ch. 27 coming home

Ch. 29 Harry's B-day, summer, a new home

Ch. 30 finding a horcrux, new friends, Hermione's B-Day

Ch. 31 finding Luna and Neville

Ch. 32 the founders' family trees

Ch. 33 Japan Summer 1989

Ch. 34 how to destroy a horcrux

Ch. 35 saving a life I

Ch. 36 saving a life II

Ch. 37 new students

Ch. 38 Japan Summer 1990

Ch. 39 finding/destroying horcrux

Ch. 40 Dumbles befuddled

Ch. 41 the Hogwarts plan



Ch. 42 Japan, Summer 1991

Ch. 43 getting ready for Dumbles and Hogwarts, be my girlfriend? - ends August 31, 1991.

Mind you, I might come up with an idea for a couple other chapters, but 45 will be worst case. It may also be fewer chapters than any of that before we start Book II (title not yet decided) when they're off to Hogwarts to confront the real future in need of change...

## CHAPTER TWENTY-FOUR: TRANSITIONS

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 22, 1988 - 16 WILLOW WAY, LOUGHTON, ESSEX, U.K.

The two MI-5 agents stayed for another couple of hours and really got to know the people in the house. Even though this was not really a mission, when they left they both believed the mission was a huge success. They had met the legendary "Boy-Who-Lived" and found him to be quite ordinary under the circumstances. He seemed fairly well adjusted considering what they did know about his history and, Mike Evans thought, his current situation seemed ideal for the lad. Both he and his partner were serious about inviting the children over to their homes for visits. It was hard enough to find children for their children to meet who were magical, likeable and acceptable.

Their meeting with Lupin and McGonagall was of far more immediate import to Office W. Their office had been trying to recruit or hire on a Were for ages and, as the Grayback case was the most important open case in the office, Lupin was a serious bonus to their day's activities. It did not hurt that he was both a fully qualified and experienced Auror and more than a little put off by the magical government. Most magicals working for the non-magical government were either Muggle Borns or people like Lupin and Greengrass; very critical of the magical government and magical world as it currently existed.

McGonagall was arguably another bonus. Whether they could recruit her remained to be seen, but having contact with the Deputy Headmistress of Hogwarts who was also very active internationally in



educational circles might one day prove beneficial to Her Majesty's government. They also learned about the Watanabe School in Japan. It might be something worth looking into both for their own children and for their government.

McGonagall left not long after the two agents as she was going to spend the day running errands in preparation for the children's trip to Japan. Hermione and Robert Granger returned home and learned of the visit. Hermione was a little put out that she had not been there to meet the two men from MI-5, but Harry and Clarice told her everything they could about the meeting and what they did not understand was explained by her mother or Remus.

"So," Robert asked as the family finished dinner, "what are your thoughts on their offer."

Remus knew the question was directed at him. "Aside from the fact that it is the best offer I've had in years, I am intrigued. I'll at least sit down with their boss and learn more. It might be a once in a lifetime opportunity and catching Greyback is something that needs to be done. He is responsible for more than half of all the Were's in Britain and a fair few on the continent as well. He's the main reason for the laws that set me on the curb. Most of us are not like that."

"Doesn't that violate that Statute of Secrecy thing?" Hermione asked.

"No, it does not," a new voice said. For the Grangers and the children, they knew the voice and knew that Sensei had made an appearance. Remus looked at the old man in shock.

"Who are you?" he asked.

Sensei winced. While he had been certain that Harry could come to trust Remus, once again it seemed too quick. He would have to work on that or Dumbles might find himself in this loop one day...

"That's Sensei," Harry said. "We usually only see him on weekends, but he occasionally shows up on other days." Harry then explained exactly who and what Sensei was.



“So let me get this strait,” Remus said. “You are a magical projection of Harry from the future?”

“I am a projection of a Harry from a possible future,” Sensei replied, “a future that I am hoping to avoid.”

“And what has changed?”

“In the larger sense, I cannot say. But changes have been made, that much is certain.”

“For example?”

“In my timeline you did not meet Harry until 1993 when Dumbledore hired you to teach Defense Against the Dark Arts. As I understand it, that was the only decent job you held after you left the Auror Corps. I lived with the Durselys until I was seventeen. True, after the abuse that led Harry here into the hospital, things got a little better for me. But I never was loved there. Harry met Hermione over three years before I did. I never met Clarice in my life. I only learned about her years after she died. I never knew I had another Uncle. I did not learn about magic until my eleventh birthday and did not learn nearly as much as I could because the Dursleys had conditioned me to loath learning. Sirius Black stayed in Azkaban until his escape in 1994 and he remained a fugitive for the rest of his life. He was only exonerated after he died. Hermione here did not have friends until she was twelve. She never learned that McGonagall was her Great-grandmother and died believing she was a Muggle Born and never knew the truth about her heritage.”

“And what’s that?” Remus asked.

“Came as a surprise to me when I learned it recently,” Sensei said. “When I was in my twenties, I learned I was the magical heir of Godric Gryffindor and Salazar Slytherin.”

“But Voldemort claims he’s the heir,” Remus protested.

“One of the projects I am going to have the children work on before they begin Hogwarts is to trace the Founder’s lines from them to the



present. They will trace both the legal heir and the magical heir. They will find that Voldemort is the legal heir of Slytherin because one of the magical heirs was disinherited centuries ago. A decedent of that magical heir was a daughter who married the magical heir of Gryffindor. They had a son who became the magical heir of both lines and Harry is the magical heir of that son."

"Interesting," Remus said. "Should Voldemort return..."

"Which he will," Sensei interrupted. "That much cannot be changed although the manner of his return will be different."

"Why?"

"In my timeline, Peter Pettigrew was the one who brought Voldemort back. In this timeline, Pettigrew is in Azkaban."

"So doesn't that mean Voldemort cannot return?" Robert asked.

"There are others who would be more than happy to facilitate Voldemort's return," Sensei said. "It may still be Pettigrew."

"How?" Remus asked.

"This is pure speculation on my part, but he can escape if he ever figures out how."

"But no one has ever escaped!"

"In my timeline, Sirius did."

"How?"

"Sirius is an animagus. You may recall he told you that's what kept him sane. As a dog, he simply walked out one day and never looked back."

"And Pettigrew the rat?"

"May figure that bit out as well."



“Don’t count on it. Pettigrew is weak, a coward and not terribly bright.”

“Then there will be another,” Sensei said. “Far more Death Eaters escaped justice than the Ministry believes. Many are still loyal to Voldemort and his cause. Voldemort will return.”

“And this information about being the true heir?”

“I did not learn that until it was too late to have been of any use. Now? Well, it’s up to Harry here. It would severely undermine Voldemort’s support if his followers learn that he is not the true heir.”

“When the time is right,” Harry said, “when the truth can do the most good.”

“In my timeline,” Sensei continued, “we never learned that Hermione was the magical heir of Rowena Ravenclaw.”

“You’re kidding,” Remus said.

“Nope. She is. In my time, Hermione and I researched the Founders’ genealogy. Hermione had come across an obscure text about the Founders and Hogwarts that told us it would be a good idea if we could reunite the Founders heirs. That’s when we learned I was the heir of Gryffindor and Slytherin. We were able to trace the Ravenclaw line to Professor McGonagall and her daughters, granddaughters and great-granddaughters but never learned that Hermione was one of them. All the others were killed by Voldemort and his followers before my parents died.

“We found out that one of our good friends was the heir of Hufflepuff. But it was too late. She was already dead as were her two sons. That line was gone forever. Now? Now it will be possible to reunite the Founders lines.”

“And this is important?”

“It could be.”



“Anything else?”

“MI-5 was a bit of a shock,” Sensei said. “I always suspected the non-magical world knew far more about the magical than we thought. When they went to war against us, we were too easily wiped out. Now, I know why.”

“And what do we do about it?”

“I always felt that the divide between the two worlds was dangerous. They never trusted us because we never let them. That is something that should change and my guess is this connection with the non-magical government is a means to change that. Maybe not for our entire world, but if they see that there are witches and wizards who are not a threat to them and will help defend against those who are, then the worst case may not come to pass.”

“So you think I should work for them?”

“My role here is limited. I provide information Harry needs to know to avoid the worst possible futures. I can advise, but cannot command. I think it’s a good idea, but it is up to you to make that decision. I promised myself I would not play the role of another Dumbledore in my life, and that goes for the lives of anyone else I can speak to.

“All I can do is tell you when a decision will lead the wrong way. This is not one of those times since this did not happen in my time. It’s up to you, Remus, to decide whether you take the next step.”

“But I’ve agreed to watch the children,” Remus began.

“Remus,” Rose said, “we’ll manage. We hired you because we needed someone to watch the kids and we know you’re trustworthy. We could see that from the moment we first met you. We chose you also because you needed a job. But, do not think you have to stay on just because you agreed to. This sounds like a marvelous opportunity for you and we would never want you to give up an opportunity for us. We think you should take it. Just so long as you remember you are still a member of this family and we expect you to visit and spend time with us and the kids as often as you can.”



"Thanks," Remus said.

"Besides, from what those two gentleman said, you will not start until around the time these three are due to return to school."

Remus nodded. "Thank you. I know we've only known each other a few days, but this family has already come to mean something to me. It's been a long time since I felt so welcome."

"More's the loss for the rest of the world," Rose said.

SATURDAY, JUNE 25, 1988 - ST. MUNGO'S HOSPITAL FOR MAGICAL MALADIES AND INJURIES, LONDON, U.K.

Remus approached the closed door to Room 437 and could swear he could hear a woman's giggle from within. He was also certain he must be hearing things. He opened the door and saw a couple seated on one of the chairs by the window. It was a petite blonde who seemed to be exploring for the larger, black haired man's tonsils. Fortunately, the pair appeared to be fully clothed. Remus cleared his throat to attract their attention. The couple bloke apart and Remus could see that his friend Sirius had a new friendship with Healer-in-Training Sophie Tompkins. She was dressed in street clothes so Remus figured it was probably her day off. He chuckled to himself. If anyone deserved a romantic relationship, it was his long suffering friend.

"I'm surprised at you, Sophie," he said in a mock serious tone, "as a Healer-in-Training, you should know better than to put things in your mouth if you don't know where it's been."

The young woman blushed and snuggled into his best friend's chest. It was clear she was only a little embarrassed.

"Git," Sirius laughed back. "Did anyone teach you to knock?"

"Been out of circulation a while," Remus shrugged. "Guess I have to relearn manners and such."



"Indeed," Sophie giggled. "It is fortunate that Siri here is not yet cleared for more strenuous activities."

"Siri?"

"Me you dolt!" Sirius said with a laugh.

"So, how long?" Remus asked.

"I've been flirting with Sophie from the day I arrived and despite my best efforts, she refused to fall to my many charms - until her day off today when I had been assured I would not be entertaining any others."

"I don't want to hurt him," Sophie giggled, "but I've been dying to kiss him practically since the day we met."

Remus sat down on another chair facing the couple. He shook his head. "Still have a way with the Ladies, you old dog!"

"Oi!," Sirius protest, "this is - er - more than it appears!"

Remus raised an eyebrow. He could tell Sirius was not joking. This was not one of his infamous dalliances from years before.

"Six and a half years in that hellhole allowed me an opportunity to re-evaluate my life, in the off chance I ever got it back," Sirius confessed. "What can I say?"

"I'm happy for you, I guess," Remus said.

"Thanks Mate. I assure you, Sophie is different."

"Thanks Cutie," she added.

"I thought you said the kids were not coming today," Sirius continued trying to get off the subject of his love life.

"They're going out to celebrate," Remus nodded. "Hermione finished yesterday, top of her class. As Harry and Clarice did as well, the



Grangers are taking them out for a fun day and nice dinner. They should be by tomorrow.”

“They better be,” Sirius said. “Aren’t they leaving for Japan soon?”

“Their flight out is Tuesday afternoon.”

“Well, they better see their bedridden godfather before they leave.”

“They will Sirius.”

“You know they will,” Sophie added. “They really like you.”

“I just wish...”

“I know,” Sophie said softly. “But you’re a free man again. They’re still young. It’s not like they were all grown up.”

“Still...”

“What have I been telling you?”

Sirius laughed. “You’re right, Sophie. Time to look to the future and not the past. So, Moony, what’s been happening?”

“You wouldn’t believe me if I told you,” Remus said.

“Try me?”

“I might have a permanent job offer,” Remus replied. He then told Sirius all about Office W and the visit to the Granger’s a few days before.

“So,” Sirius said, “you’ll be like a Muggle Auror?”

Remus nodded.

“And your ‘little fury problem’?”



"That's why they want me. The Auror training would be enough, but my condition is actually a bonus. Apparently, they don't have any laws about Weres."

"But you'll be working for the Muggles. Doesn't that run afoul of the Statute of Secrecy?"

"We are not allowed to tell Muggles about magic unless they already know. Office W already knows."

"Still, a wizard in the Muggle government..."

"I am hardly the first, Sirius. I'm hardly the only. Agent Evans - who's Harry's biological Uncle by the way - is married to a witch and has eight magical children. The other bloke, Greengrass, is a Pureblood. Fully trained as an Auror he went over during the War because at least the Muggles were trying to fight back. He stayed because it's a better political situation, nicer working environment and the pay's about twice what he would make as an Auror."

"Still..."

"Sirius, it's the only real job I am likely to get where I can use my education and training. If they make the offer, I'm taking it."

"And what about the kids?"

"That job was just for the summer. Once they are back in school, there really is nothing for me to do. I'll still see them, I just won't sit for them all the time."

"And how do they feel about this?"

"They think it's cool."

Sirius nodded. "Hold on, you said this Evans bloke is Harry and Clarice's Uncle? Why haven't we ever heard about him?"

"Lily was a child of her father's second marriage. Mike was the only surviving child from the first. Mike was in the Army when Lils was



born. He only met her a handful of times. As for Lils' sister, he never liked her and never bothered to visit her."

"He's not going to..."

"No, Sirius. He's not going to try and take his niece and nephew. He's even more impressed with the Grangers than you are. He does want the kids to pop round every now and then. He's got a magical son and daughter who are about their age."

"Any other surprises?"

"Harry has a 'special' friend called Sensei," Remus said and then began to describe the old gentleman in detail, including who and what he really was.

"You've seen him?" Sirius asked.

Remus nodded. "Harry can always see him when he chooses to appear. People Harry trusts can see him as well. Right now, that list his Hermione, Clarice, the Grangers, McGonagall and me. Sensei believes it may include you too, but he's not about to show up here. A muggle hospital is one thing. Here, he's not sure if he could remain secret and is also unsure of the effects the inherent magic might have on his projection."

"And this Sensei really is Harry? Or a Harry?"

"Our Harry confirmed that Sensei knows things about him from before his hospital stay that no one else but he would know. I was skeptical at first, but the more I've spoken with him, the more believable he becomes."

"And he's here to change the timeline?" Sophie asked.

Remus nodded. "He already has. In his time, Harry never went to the hospital after that terrible beating. It was from Sensei that McGonagall received a hint to check out the young Weasley boy's rat and thus unmask Peter. In Sensei's time, you were never released from Azkaban, Sirius. You escaped in 1994 and remained a fugitive



for the rest of your life. Hermione lived her whole life never knowing she was not a Muggle Born. She never learned she was related to McGonagall. Harry was stuck with those vile relatives until he came of age. He would one day meet and become friends with Hermione, but they first met on the Hogwarts Express. Harry would not learn about a lot of things he's already been told for years, if ever. He never met his sister. She died in early 1998. He never met his Uncle Mike. I never had a decent job. The list of changes already is staggering."

"Yet limited," Sirius thought allowed. "You say this Sensei is here to affect more than just a handful of lives, and yet..."

"Sirius, it's not even been two months," Remus said. "The real changes will not happen for several more years. But the mere thought of what that boy will one day have to face..."

"What do you mean?"

"In the end, Sensei had to face defeat and kill Voldemort, several times."

There was a gasp from Sophie at the mention of the name.

"When?"

"Sensei has not told the children yet," Remus said. "He will, but after they come back from Japan."

"Did he tell you?"

Remus nodded. "Voldemort will attempt to return to corporeal form in about three years. He will possess a wizard to attempt this at first. Sensei killed the professor in June of 1992 when he was eleven."

"Bloody Hell!"

"The next year, one of his horcruxes..."

"One? He has more than one?"



Remus nodded. "Anyway, one of them takes possession of a student. Nearly succeeds, but twelve year old Sensei stopped him, killing a sixty foot long basilisk in the process."

"But he was how old?"

"Twelve. And he had barely any defense training. His first two DADA Profs were useless."

"Bloody hell! Harry has to go through that?"

"Sensei did. It's not certain whether Harry will. But, the possessed Professor and the horcrux and the basilisk for that matter will still need to be destroyed and Harry will have to take out at least two of the three."

"Poor kid," Sirius sighed.

"Bright side is this time it might well be child's play for the boy."

"Punny! Very Punny?"

"What can I say?"

"And the student?"

"Which one? Sorry."

"The possessed one."

"Survived. Voldemort used a necromancy ritual to restore himself to a body in June of 1995. Sensei witnessed it and dueled the git to a draw before escaping to spread the word. In 1996, he again faced Voldemort and lived. Mind you, Sirius, this was all without any real training. What little he knew about dueling and combat magic was all self taught."

"Didn't Dumbledore..."



“No. Dumbledore believed and believes that Harry is meant to die, thus giving him the tools to survive would be counterproductive.”

“That bastard!”

“Indeed. He also believed and may one day believe, that he knows of all of the horcruxes. He was wrong on that score. He missed one. Sensei trusted him and missed it too. Sensei killed Voldemort in May of ‘98 and everyone believed it was for the last time. Sensei did tell me that by the time that happened, you and I were dead, killed by Death Eaters all of who are currently in Azkaban. One of them would bring Voldemort back over twenty-five years later. Sensei would find and destroy the final horcrux and kill the git once and for all, but by then it would be too late for the rest of humanity.”

“What’s Sensei’s plan for Harry?”

“Train him and teach him,” Remus said. “And not just Harry; Hermione and Clarice as well. There is a Prophecy that says, in essence, that in the end only Harry can bring about the final defeat of Voldemort and, by extension, the Death Eaters. When Voldemort returns, which Sensei says is inevitable, Harry should know what to do. It’ll be his show.”

“I take it this Japan thing is part of the plan?”

Remus nodded. “When the children return at the end of July, they should have already taken their O.W.L.s. By the time they are slated to start Hogwarts, they could well have at least three Masters Levels.”

“You’re kidding!”

Remus shook his head. “For all practical purposes, when Harry starts Hogwarts - and he will - he will look like an eleven year old boy. In reality, he will start with twenty years of magical training under his belt. That’s more than most people. Sensei was a sheep led to slaughter. Harry will be a lion.”

“And our role in this?”



“Harry never had any positive adult figures in his life. That is one of our roles. We are also asked to make sure the boy has fun to the extent that is possible. While he shoulders a heavy burden and is at the top of Voldemort’s ‘to kill’ list, we and the other adults in his life are to see that he has something approaching a normal childhood. We are also asked to keep his secrets and keep Dumbledore dumb and blind in regards to Harry. Finally, we are also asked to teach him what we can as well. Not everything comes from books and classrooms.”

“This is - well - I’m sure neither Lily nor James wanted this for their boy.”

“Who would? He must become the Warrior. When the war is over, he must become the Statesman. It’s a lot to ask of anyone, not to mention a boy who is barely eight years old.”

“How much of this does Harry know?”

“Most.”

“And how’s he taking it?”

“He’s pissed as hell with Dumbledore. I am too as are the others. Aside from that, he’s fine with it for now. After all, it’s years away and to a seven year old that’s a long time. Throw in that for him Hogwarts is nineteen years away, it’s even longer.”

“Not long enough, if you ask me.”

Remus nodded. “No one, not even Sensei, thinks he’s going to do this alone. He will be pivotal, but he will and must have help. I, for one, intend to help him.”

“You know I will,” Sirius said.

“Count me in,” Sophie added.

“Sophie?”



“Come on ‘Siri!’ I like the boy and his friends. I never trusted Dumbledore. I’m a Muggle Born and from what I’ve seen, most of his pro-Muggle Born rhetoric is just that. Better him than You-Know-Who, but Dumbles is the lesser of two evils. Besides, whether you know it or not, you are stuck with me, Siri.”

Sirius laughed at the expression on Remus’s face. “And here I was afraid that you were the one stuck with me, Sophie! They say the sun don’t shine on a dog’s bum every day, and it hasn’t for this old dog for so long, but now?”

“I love you too,” Sophie said before kissing Sirius on the lips.

“I think I’m going to be sick,” Remus joked. In reality, he was happy for his long suffering friend.

MONDAY, JUNE 27, 1988 - 16 WILLOW WAY, LOUGHTON, ESSEX, U.K.

In the three weeks that had passed since the children had moved into their new home with the Grangers, Sensei had observed them every day. He still only appeared to them once a week, always on Saturdays or Sundays when the Grangers, Minerva and Remus could be there as well. His magic training continued to focus on beginning to develop occlumency shields to protect their minds and the children were progressing rapidly.

Harry was a little frustrated with all the potions he had to take and the fact that they did not seem to be doing anything. However, Harry and Clarice had finally finished the potions that unbound their magic, which led to lessons from both Remus and Sensei on how to control their magic. They were both surprised at how quickly all three seemed to learn to control it and were even more surprised when all three seemed to learn to do somewhat simple magic intentionally and without wands. This was a skill all magical children could develop if encouraged to do so and what surprised Sensei was that it was the Grangers who seemed to offer the most encouragement.

Sensei was pleased that this Harry had seemed to adapt to this new life so quickly. The little boy and his sister and Hermione had become



almost inseparable and seemed to be thriving. What he heard from each of them was how none of them really had any friends before. While Sensei doubted his alterations in the timeline thus far would have a significant effect on the overall future, it already had a significant effect on several lives.

Harry, Hermione and Clarice's lives were now far removed from what they would have been had Sensei not intervened. They were obviously happy children and he loved watching them play, just as he had come to love watching happy children at play in his other reality. Clarice was the least comfortable of the three, but Harry and Hermione and the others were helping her cope with the loss of the only mother she had really known. Her side of her room was now decorated with pictures of her and her adoptive parents.

The changes in Harry even after such a short time surprised Sensei. His memories of life were that of a boy who remained abused and neglected for years to come. By the time his memories took him off to Hogwarts at age eleven, he was shy, introverted, moody, unable to relate to people too well, and fearful of any form of physical intimacy including handshakes, although he did tolerate those. He had no memory of ever being hugged, kissed or comforted before the end of his first year at Hogwarts and even then it was Hermione who was the only one who he barely tolerated doing so. It took him years to become comfortable with non-violent physical contact and even longer to where he could initiate such contact.

This Harry had grown used to it in days. He was almost clingy. He was kissed good night every night since the Grangers came into his life, always by Hermione and now he got tucked in and kissed good night by Mrs. Granger as well. He had been hugged more times than one could count and was now not afraid of hugs or even initiating one with Hermione, or his sister or the Grangers or Minnie for that matter. He had been held when he cried and had held Clarice when she cried and it seemed like it had become a natural thing for him to seek or do with those people he cared about.

Sensei wondered how this might change things. This and other events in recent weeks convinced him that Harry would not suffer alone ever again. He had lifelines. He had and accepted that he had



people who genuinely cared for and about him and for whom he cared as well. He was learning that he was not worthless in the eyes of those who mattered to him. This boy could well enter Hogwarts less insecure and more grounded than the last time. He would not be the moody and withdrawn boy from the last time and would be more willing to listen to others when need be because he was learning what trust really was at a time in his life when he could come to appreciate it. Perhaps this time things really would be different for him.

Case in point, in addition to visiting Sirius in St. Mungo's, the Granger clan had also set up "play dates" with two other wizarding families they had met who lived nearby. Harry and Clarice had met their cousins. Hermione was there as well as her parents believed interacting with other young witches and wizards would be both an education for their bookish daughter and enriching. The Evans family was their first foray into that world.

Harry and the others met the six younger Evans children. The three youngest were the ones they could relate to the best. Aaron, Billy and Harry hit it off practically from the start. Hermione, Clarice and Cynthia were also close almost from the beginning. The boys and girls played together and separately. Harry was not about to be drawn into "girly" games, but the girls had no issue with at least some of the boy games. They played tag, hide and seek and kicked a football about the park near the Evans home and generally had a grand time.

Harry and the others also met the Greengrass family. Clarice and Hermione hit it off with the two oldest, Daphne and Astoria. Harry liked the two girls, but he seemed to connect more with the two youngest, Renee and Jessie. Odd that, Sensei thought. Renee was only four and Jessie two. But the two youngest Greengrass girls seemed to think Harry was the fun one of the group and Harry seemed to grow to enjoy acting as their surrogate big brother. Again, this was not expected, but Sensei thought it was a wonderful experience for his young charge.

At least for Harry and the others, life had seemed to improve for the better.



---

Rose Granger stood at the sink in the kitchen listening to the odd sounds coming from her own back yard that morning as she washed the dishes. Harry had asked to cook breakfast again and had been given permission and the new custom was he who cooked did not do the dishes. In the past, Hermione might have done this chore, but the sounds coming from the back yard were the reason why Rose had a dish towel in hand. That and the fact was that tomorrow the children were leaving for a month and she wanted to spend a day with them as opposed to drilling cavities at her surgery.

The sounds were foreign in a way yet so pleasant. Three children were outside laughing and squealing with delight as they engaged in a game of tag or some such. One was Rose's adopted daughter Hermione. Hermione had played before, but is was usually in her room with her dolls or a game with her parents in the living room. Rose recalled it had been years since Hermione had actually played with other children. The last time Hermione had "friends" she was a toddler and, of course, she had no recollection of that time in her life. For years, she had been solitary and even more so once she learned to read.

In the three plus weeks since Harry and Clarice had come to live with them, Hermione had become a true child again. Yes, she still loved to curl up with a good book, as did the other two, and it was not uncommon to walk into the Living Room or Parlor and see the three of them reading. But they also played together. Well, mostly. Harry drew the line at dolls and stuffed animals. But kicking the football around or playing tag or hide and seek, those were games the three seemed to live for.

Rose was so happy for them. All children are blessings from God, she thought, but these three were special. Yes, they truly were magical, but the real thing was they got along so famously together and from what she had learned neither Harry nor Clarice had friends either before the Grangers took them in. As she watched them play, she knew that each was being a real child perhaps for the first time in their lives.



It was bittersweet in a way. Tomorrow they would fly off to Japan. For her and her husband, they would be home in a month. For the children, it would be 1500 days or over four years. True, they would have barely aged biologically. But they would have finished five years of schooling. Would they still be children like they are today when they returned? Would they seem older? All Rose wanted for Hermione before this strange summer was that she had a chance to enjoy a childhood. That, and Rose wanted to be there to enjoy watching her have fun and be a child. Would she miss watching Hermione and now Harry and Clarice grow up? She hoped not but feared this opportunity that had been all but handed to them would mean she would miss out on so much.

There was a POP from out back and Rose looked up from the plate she was drying and saw Remus and Minnie in the back yard. Along with them there were three trunks.

Rose sighed. They were here to help pack the children's things for the trip.



## CHAPTER TWENTY-FIVE:

### WHY DO AIRPLANES FLY?

MONDAY, JUNE 27, 1988 - 16 WILLOW WAY, LOUGHTON, ESSEX, U.K.

Harry watched impassively as Remus packed his trunk. A separate suitcase was already mostly packed and Remus explained that the trunk would be shrunken down to a small size and included within the suitcase. Everything Harry owned, with the exception of a change of clothes and one of his three sets of bed linens was now packed away in the trunk. Harry thought about that. The few toys and books, the clothes, everything were all recent acquisitions. He had come to this home with nothing but the clothes on his back and a book bag with his school things. Thus the trunk was filled with things the Grangers had bought for him.

Harry felt they were overly generous. He had never had anything new before - at least not so far as he could remember. His clothes were all hand-me-downs from his larger cousin and what toys he had were the ones his cousin discarded. He watched as Remus packed his life into the trunk and realized that his real life was barely two months old. He did not mind. The best day in the life he could remember was the day that the Grangers, his new family, found him.

His stuff barely filled the trunk and Remus said that no magic was used to make anything fit. Remus added that he would probably come back with more stuff. If he truly did learn OWL levels, he could be able to both fit his new stuff in the trunk and shrink the trunk to fit in his suitcase. Harry could not believe he would return with more than was already there, but said nothing.

If his stuff barely filled the trunk and suitcase, he knew both Hermione and Clarice would need magic to make their stuff fit. They had far more than he did. While Clarice had not taken any of her clothes from her old place, she did take most of her toys and books and loads of other stuff. Hermione, of course, had loads of things as well. All they wanted to bring were now being placed into their trunks for the trip.



It had taken Remus all of twenty minutes to pack Harry's things. Now, Harry watched as Remus helped "Aunt Minne" deal with Hermione and Clarice's stuff. Neither of his two friends were the pack rat that his Cousin Dudley had been, but they both had loads of stuff. Hermione had her fancy doll collection and loads of books and such. Clarice had her plush animals and her own book collection as well. The girls had loads of clothes they had to sort through as neither would be allowed to pack anything that no longer fit. Had Harry had a normal life he might be jealous at all the stuff the girls had. But he knew they had one thing he had not had until very recently - a loving family. As he watched the packing, Harry could not help but smile. The Grangers and Hermione and Clarice had given him the greatest present ever - a real family that loved him.

It was something he had dreamt about. It was something that he had hoped for. It was now something he had. So what if they had more stuff than he did. He had the one thing he had always wanted and that was more than enough. And, Harry thought, I have Hermione and Clarice! They are coming with me too! My sister! My girl! My friends! Harry knew they meant more to him than all the toys or books in the world and they were going to be with him! He knew he would miss Bob and Rosie, as he now called Hermione's parents. He would also miss "Aunt Minnie." To a lesser extent, he would miss his Godfather, who seemed so cool and even Remus. But at least he would not be alone again. His sister and best friend would be with him.

The packing was soon complete and Harry had to admit the rooms looked bare. As little as he had, he still had things. There had been framed pictures on his wall of his new family and they were now gone. Hermione and Clarice's room had been seemingly packed with stuff, and now it too was bare and sterile. True, in a day or so another room in another country would be repacked with their things, but there was a slight sadness to seeing the walls, shelves and tables devoid of any sign that they had lived there.

"Kids?" the voice of Mr. Granger called. "Living room."

Harry and the others could tell they were not in trouble. Aside from that they had no idea what was up.



They soon arrived and saw the four adults waiting for them.

“Children,” Minerva said, “we have a few presents to give you. The last things you’ll need to pack. And we have a surprise for you. And Harry?”

“Yes Aunt Minnie?”

“If Sensei is around, he might want to be here.”

“Erm,” Harry began.

“Harry has never called me,” Sensei said as he materialized. The others looked at him and the old man had a fake pout on his face that earned chuckles from the adults. “He always could and always can, but he never has.”

“You never said I could!” Harry started.

“Ooops.”

More chuckles, although Harry seemed to glower at his older alter ego.

“Give me a break, Harry,” Sensei said. “I am a hundred and sixty-eight years old. I’ve used time tuners and time compression so my time age is closer to four hundred and fifty. Call it a senior moment.”

After the adults stopped laughing Harry asked: “What’s that?”

“We old codgers forget things.”

“Oh,” Harry began. “But you said you’re like a computer!”

“And that means rubbish in, rubbish out. Even I am not perfect.”

“Always thought you were mental,” Harry mumbled. “Brilliant! But mental.”



“Join the queue,” Sensei laughed. “So, what’s this about? Going away party?”

“Something like that,” Rose said. “You first, Remus.”

Remus pulled a small bag from his pocket and then waived a wand over it. It grew to several times its original size.

“I’ve got some presents for Harry and Clarice, and don’t fret Hermione, you have not been forgotten at all. Right then.” Remus pulled out two books and handed them to Harry and Clarice although as soon as Harry opened his, he knew it was a photo album. The first photo was old. It was a young man in the leather jacket and uniform of the RAF standing beside a Hawker Hurricane. Below it was a caption: Flying Officer Alfred Julius Evans, RAF, 166 Fighter Group. France, 1939.

“Your Uncle Mike and Aunt Emma made these albums for you. They are of your Mother’s family - and that includes Mike’s family as well. Towards the end, you have photos of your Mum growing up from a baby, through Hogwarts and to her wedding day. There are pictures of your Uncle Mike when he was in the Army, and a handful of his family as well. Finally, there are pictures of each of you with your mother that we added to complete the Evans story.”

“Th-thanks,” Harry began. He had a family. He had a history!

“Not done yet,” Remus said softly, reaching in and pulling out two more albums. “Aunt Minnie, Sirius and I worked on this one. Well, Minnie and I collected the photos and Sirius arranged them and such. It’s your Potter side all the way back to your Great-Great Grandparents, although there are loads of photos of your father growing up.”

Harry was stunned. He skimmed through it looking at all the photos, some of which were moving! They told him those were wizarding photos. One stopped him in his tracks. Two young men in flight uniforms were standing beside a Spitfire. He read the Caption: Group Captain Alfred Evans congratulating Flight Leader Charles David Potter on becoming an Ace, Italy, February 6, 1944.



"They knew each other?" Harry asked.

"Evans was Charles Potter's Group Commander at the time," Remus said. "They certainly knew of each other. At your parents wedding ... well, it was the first time they had met since the War and they talked for hours about it."

"Wow! But wasn't he a Wizard?"

"Fair few wizards did answer the call of His Majesty's government, Harry. Your Grandfather was quite the flyer as a pure wizard and proved quite the flyer as a wizard in the RAF. Ended the war with 16 kills. Course, your other Granddad, who had fought in the Battle of Britain and more, ended with 32 kills."

"Wow!"

"As with your first albums, this one ends with your parents' wedding," Remus said. "Now so far, both are the same, quite literally copies. These last two are unique to each of you." Remus handed Harry and Clarice another pair of albums, although it was clear Clarice's was larger. "These are pictures from after your parents's wedding. The opening pages are the same, but Harry has all of his baby photos in his. Clarice has all of hers prior to the day you were separated. You will find some with both of you in them. Clarice's also includes many of the photos from her adoptive family, which is why hers is larger. Finally, there are photos of you since you met the Grangers."

"Who made these?" Harry asked.

"Mike and Emma Evans made the Evans Album. Sirius put together the Potter album, with help from Minnie. She found many of the photos in your family vault. And, of course, Rose finished the album with the recent photos."

"Th-thanks," Harry said.

"Why?" Clarice asked.



“We never want you to forget,” Rose said. “Not your birthparents, your adoptive parents, nor us. While we will see you again in a month’s time, for you it will be four years and forty days. Always remember those who love and loved.”

Clarice nodded.

“Wh-what about me?” Hermione asked. There was a hint of pain in her voice.

“We haven’t forgotten you, Sweetie,” Rose replied.

Minerva handed her the largest album yet. “This is my family,” Minerva said. It starts from when I was a child and ends around the time you mother and father died. There are pictures of my younger brother and sister and later their families, all my children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren, including you. There are loads of your mother in there. With the possible exception of my brother Conner and his family, you and I are all that is left, Hermione.”

“B-brother?” Hermione asked.

McGonagall nodded. “My younger brother. He was seven years younger than I was. He married when he was in his thirties and had three children that I know of. Early on during the last War, he said he was going to take his family and move far away. I don’t know if he did. I do know that they are not known to be dead and that I never heard from them again. Deep down, I do hope they made it and are living safe and happy lives somewhere far away.”

“And this,” Rose added handing Hermione another large album, “is your life as our daughter.”

“Thanks. I love you all so much.”

“And we love you two, Hermione.”

---

---



The kids were asleep. They were all packed and ready to go and the morning would probably be an easy one in a way. Their British Airways flight to Tokyo was set to depart Heathrow and 1:45 the following afternoon. Bob and Rose knew they had to get their at least two hours early and that Heathrow was close to an hour and a half away by the motorway. They had discussed the Underground as it was much faster, but they would have to change trains twice. Ordinarily, this was not a big deal. But with three young children and all the luggage, it was not worth the potential problems.

Rose, Minnie and Robert were seated at the kitchen table. Minnie would be staying the night as she was the adult who would accompany the children to Kyoto. They had just finished a lengthy talk about Muggle Customs and changing planes, as Minnie had seldom done either and it had been over a decade since she had done it at all. Their flight to Japan was scheduled to arrive at Tokyo's Narita International Airport at 9:10 in the morning of June 29th Tokyo time. They were then booked on Japan Airlines for a flight that would depart Narita at 1:30 in the afternoon and arrive at Osaka Itami International at 2: 25. They knew that someone from the school would be meeting Minerva and the children when they arrived at Itami to take them to Kyoto.

Bob looked up and could see his wife quietly crying.

"Rosie?"

"I - I don't know if I can do it, Bob," Rose said. "I mean, they'll be gone for so long! I know to us it will only be a month. But Bob? Four years!! They'll have four years that we missed."

"They all promised to write a lot..."

"You know it's not the same, Bob. Hermione's our baby! Harry and Clarice are such wonderful kids! They might be totally different when they get back and I would have missed it!"

"I'm sure they'll be fine," Bob tried to say soothingly, although in reality he had some misgivings as well.



“What if they’re not? They’re so young, Bob. They need a parent or parents! I mean, if they were older, maybe. But Hermione’s not even nine yet and Clarice will turn seven while she’s there! We won’t be there for her Birthday!”

“She can call us.”

“Not the same! Oh, if only there was a way that I could be there for them. I mean, think about it, Bob. This is our slow time of the year. I could go and you could stay here and it should not affect our practice at all.”

“Cept I’ll have to give up my Tuesday golf outings.”

“I’m sure you’d manage. Oh it’s pointless! I can’t go. I am so going to miss them.”

“I know. So will I, Dear. These last several weeks have been wonderful for our Hermione, and Harry and Clarice ... and us.”

“If there were a way....” Then Rose sighed. “But it’s too late, isn’t it?”

Bob nodded. Neither of the Grangers saw a mischievous smile form on Minerva’s face.

TUESDAY, JUNE 28, 1988 - HEATHROW INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT, LONDON, U.K.

They arrived at the airport in plenty of time and seemed to hit the British Airways check-in at just the right moment. There were surprisingly few people in the queues for flights as they waited to check-in. Soon, however, the queues were filling with perhaps hundreds upon hundreds of passengers. Each of the four travelers had a suitcase that they would check through to Tokyo. They could not check them all the way through because the bags were subject to inspection upon their initial arrival in Japan. They also had a carry-on that had a couple of changes of clothes, toiletries and books and such for the flight. Their tickets stated they were on British Airways Flight 23, non-stop to Tokyo and they would be seated in Row 23, Seats C through F. Harry had no idea what that meant.



With over an hour to spare before boarding would commence, they found a small restaurant for a bite of something to eat and for the four travelers to say their goodbyes to the Grangers. The Grangers would not be able to walk them to their gate as they were not ticketed and only ticketed passengers were allowed passed security.

Minerva asked a question that had vexed her for years.

“I’ve always wondered how airplanes stay up in the sky.”

While Harry had read about that once, he really did not understand. But Robert Granger had wanted to be a pilot in his youth. He even had hoped to join the Royal Air Force and had gone so far as to find out what it took to become a pilot. Much to his dismay, while his eyesight was good enough for the Paras and SAS, it was not good enough to be a pilot. So, he quipped, he was fully qualified to jump out of perfectly good airplanes, but not to fly them.

“Why would you jump out of a perfectly good airplane?” Minerva asked.

“Military thing,” Robert replied hoping not to be distracted as he wanted to tell Minnie what he knew before she got on “that infernal machine” and white-knuckled it for almost fourteen hours.

He explained that planes flew due to something called “lift.” The size and shape of the wings had something to do with it as did something called “the angle of attack.” Most airplane wings are not perfectly parallel to the ground when they are cruising, rather they are angled up, if only slightly at the front or “leading edge.” These factors combined with the forward momentum created by the engines create lift.

As the wing moves forward, it pushes the air in front of it out of the way. Some of the air passed under the wing and some over it. But because of its shape and such, the air flowing under the wing is traveling faster than the air flowing over it. In a way, this means that at any given moment in time, so long as the wing is moving forward, there is actually more air under the wing than over it. This creates a



pressure differential. The air pressure below the wing is higher than that over the wing. If this differential is high enough, the wing is - for lack of a better word - sucked upwards or held up high in the sky.

"What happens if you stop moving fast enough?" Minnie asked.

"You stall."

"What's that mean?"

"You stop flying and start falling."

"That's bad, isn't it?"

"Can be," Robert agreed. "But every pilot learns about the characteristics of their aircraft and trains to handle that situation. Combat pilots actually use that at times."

"So if those engines stop...?"

"Many commercial airliners can glide. They will lose height, but a skilled pilot can glide them down safely, for the most part."

"For the most part?"

"If there's not an airport nearby, there will be a problem. But such things almost never happen. It is the safest way to travel by Muggle means really. You're more likely to die on the motorway than on a plane. Surely, there are means of magical travel that are safer than others?"

Minerva nodded. "Truth is, any form of magical travel has risks - potentially deadly ones. Some are certainly more risky than others."

"Same's true here. Flying is actually the safest, as odd as that might sound."

Soon it was time for the travelers to make their way to their flight. It was a tear filled goodbye for all concerned. Although, had any of the



children seen Rose the night before, they may have wondered why it was not more so.

The travelers left the Grangers behind as they had to and headed to their gate. They found four empty seats against the window. Hermione and Clarice sat down facing away, as that was the way the seats were positioned and had pulled out their current books and were reading. Harry, however, was enthralled by what was happening outside and spent the time between when they arrived at the Gate and when they had to board their flight staring out the window and watching all the planes.

Their row was called and they joined the queue to find their seats. When they finally found them, Harry was very disappointed. They were in the center row! His first time on a plane and he could not even look out the window! But Robert had told Minerva what to expect. Most of the flight would be at night. There really would not be all that much to see at all. Minerva did not know if that was true, but it seemed to placate the disappointed boy.

The children watched an in-flight movie and had dinner. They slept for hours afterwards, thanks to a potion Minnie slipped into their drinks and awoke in time for breakfast. Not long after, it was announced they were now descending into Tokyo and that it was now 0820 local time on June 30th. Harry asked about that. The flight was supposed to last only about fourteen hours and yet they lost an entire day? Minerva did her best to explain, but was not sure he or the others truly grasped the notion.

"It's like we traveled in time," Harry said.

"In a way," Minerva replied. "Tokyo is eight hours ahead of us based upon there the sun it. The sun rises there eight hours before it does in Britain."

"Oh."

Their flight eventually landed in Tokyo and they eventually left the plane and followed the crowds to the international baggage claim.



They soon had their bags and were standing in the queue to pass through the Japanese Customs inspection.

“Professor McGonagall?” a voice asked.

Minerva looked and saw a young Japanese woman in an official looking uniform standing near them. “Yes?”

“Ohaigotosaimasu,” she said with a bow. “My Sensei Watanabe sends his greetings as does Sensei Genda and welcomes you to Japan, Land of the Rising Sun.” She bowed again.

“Thank you?” Minerva said.

“Are these your charges?”

“Yes, er?”

“Midori,” the young woman said. “Midori Yamata. I am an assistant at the school and have been tasked to take you through our Customs and to the school directly. Unless you really wish to make your connecting flight to Osaka?”

“Er...”

“We can either be at the school in half an hour or six hours.”

“Thank you - um - arigato.”

“Douitashimashite.”

Minerva and the others followed the young woman with their luggage away from the queue towards what looked like an interrogation room. Many of the other passengers, initially upset at the seemingly preferential treatment, now figured the older woman and the three children were in for a long, long day.

As soon as the door closed behind them, they found they were in a much larger room.



“We prefer the subterfuge,” the young woman said. “Your queue mates now think you’ve been singled out for an interview, rather than getting a short cut through our magical Customs. Please place your bags on the table,” she said indicating a large table with two similarly uniformed men behind it. “This should not take but a moment.”

Minerva and the others did as they were told. The two men were each holding some kind of staff and waved them over the bags.

“Pasupoto, Kudasai?” one of the men said.

“Your passports, please,” the young woman translated.

“Anata wa Nihongo wakarimasuka?” the man said to McGonagall and the others.

“Ie. Wakarimasen.” the young woman replied.

The man shrugged as he stamped the passports.

“What was that?” Minerva asked.

“He asked if you understood Japanese. I told him you do not.”

Minerva nodded.

“No need to worry,” the young woman said. “After two terms - three at the most - you will all be fairly proficient.”

“We will?” Hermione asked.

“Hai! That means ‘yes.’ With the exception of your English classes, all classes will be in English and Japanese. More in English at first. Almost entirely in Japanese at the end.”

“Why?”

“We have students from all over the world speaking twenty or more languages. We teach them all Japanese as their school Common Tongue. Admittedly, English, Spanish or Chinese is more useful in



terms of the numbers of students in summer session. But this a Japanese school. By your Seventh Term, you will no longer be segregated in class by your native tongues. Still, you will live in the English Apartments your entire time here. Japanese is the official language on the grounds and in the classrooms and school common areas. In your living quarters and community, English will still be your language. You will continue learning English, but you will also learn Japanese and be encouraged to learn at least one other language over your time here.

“Follow me.”

“How are we getting to Kyoto? And why Kyoto and not Tokyo or some other place?” Minerva asked.

“Second question first,” Midori said. “Kyoto was for over a thousand years the Imperial Capitol. It was not until the rise of the Shogunates that it was moved to what was then called Edo and now Tokyo. For us magicals, Kyoto remains the heart and soul of Japan. As to your first question, we pass through this door.” She indicated a normal looking door. “It is a portal that shall transport us to the Gate of Harmony.”

“The what?”

“The main entry through the school wards. Follow.” She opened the door and passed through and the others followed.

They found themselves not before a gate in a wall, but a free standing wooden structure. It was more art than functional and looked not unlike some of the strange writing they had seen at the airport in Tokyo.

“This is a Spirit Gate,” Midori said. “It is sacred to us magicals and is also an ancient feature in Shinto. For us, we pass through and are purified. Pass through and good fortune awaits on the other side. Follow.”

They did as they were told. As soon as they passed through, it was as if they stepped into another world. On the other side, it was an



arch of sorts of clearly Japanese style that led into a wood without any seen paths. On this side, they seemed to step into another city altogether. Gone were the closely packed high rises they had noticed in both cities briefly and before them lay low lying buildings of ancient design, peaked and tiled roofs, wooden and plaster walls with rice paper screens and such. In the distance were a cluster of tall, more modern looking towers - not unlike apartment flats in London, only better looking. As they followed their guide, it was as if they were walking through a rich and ancient Japanese style village with the perfect landscaping.

Midori told them that these ancient buildings were the class rooms, dojos (martial arts rooms) and crafts shops of the school. The surrounding landscape was man made, yet in the Japanese style made to look natural. Japanese gardens of the classical sort such as the grounds here were made to imitate and improve upon the harmony of true nature. As a result, the magical power of the land was enhanced.

There were eight “campuses” on the grounds, all surrounded by or encased within the gardens. Their enters were each a point on an octagon, for in eastern mythos and culture, eight was the most powerful of numbers. Four campuses were on each of the cardinal points of the compass while the other four were half way between.

The eastern most, and therefore the most sacred of all was the Shrine. It was a Shinto Shrine dedicated to the magical deities. The South, Southwest and Southeast points were the magical schools, which included both all the magical classrooms and all the martial arts dojos. While physical, the arts were considered a form of magic in their own fight. To the West, Northwest and North were the non-magical campuses for all levels of education from Primary School through University. The center of the Western Campus had the school’s main library. To the Northeast was the modern physical campus with swimming pools and gymnasiums and playing fields.

“Mind, Body and Magic,” Midori said. It was the school motto.

In the center were eight tall buildings. Each was a ground floor with twelve upper floors. These were the student living quarters. Each



floor and a half could accommodate up to thirty students. One floor was their apartments. They were small, built in the Japanese style of maximizing efficiency. Six were larger three bedroom, six were smaller two bedroom. Each had two small baths and a common area with a cooking space, dining space and living space all rolled into one. There were two additional apartments for adult advisors. These were both one bedroom flats with a private office - a luxury by Japanese standards.

There was a half floor either above or below connected by a stair to the living floor. This floor had a recreation room with games, a larger common room for lounging and a study hall for studying. The Ground Floor had each tower's main dining facility, Midori explained. Japanese was the only language used on that floor and until a student was considered proficient, they could not dine in their own flats.

At the center of the eight tower living complex was the "Market." There were all sorts of shops and such as well as places to eat and a movie complex. But one needed spending money to really enjoy it, while everything else was covered by the school tuition.

"It's such a beautiful place," Minnie said in awe.

"From its beginnings a thousand years ago, it was designed to evoke an inner peace," Midori said. "From peace one can find center and from center, knowledge and harmony."

They were led to one of the towers and entered the Lobby. She led them to the lifts and they climbed in. The lift stopped on the tenth floor.

"This is your stop, Professor," Midori said.

"Thank you," Minerva replied. "I'll see you three at diner," she added with a smile. The children were gob smacked.

"She's a floor advisor for the first Summer Session," Midori said. "She's assigned to one of the English Class, Single Session floors. You three are on Twelve which is where all first time Five Session students will live. Your minder will be here for six Real Days - a full



year of classes for you. And yes, you are free to visit her in your spare time."

"This is WONDERFUL," Hermione said. "We have family here!"

Harry nodded in agreement.

"What am I then?" Clarice asked in fear.

"No," Hermione said. "You are family too. But we have an adult here. Someone we can trust."

"Oh."

They followed Midori onto the twelfth and top floor of their building. She showed them to their two bedroom flat and it was obvious where Harry and the others were to sleep. One room had a single bed and the other had two. It would be tighter than at home, but each quietly thought cozier in a way. They were instructed to drop off their bags and to follow Midori down a flight of stairs to their floor's common areas for a brief tour. They were shown their floor's common room, gaming room and study hall.

"Right then" Midori said when they were done and back in their flat. "Dinner is in two hours in the Ground Floor Dining Hall. At 19:00..."

"What's that?" Harry asked.

"Seven o'clock," Midori continued, "you are to meet in the Floor Common Room where you will meet your floormates and your adult advisors."

"There will be two of them. Each as a child or children on your floor. One is magical and the other is not and this is standard for all students with less than twenty full terms when they begin their summer sessions here. As you three are full summer - so will be your advisors. Your Aunt Minnie is a two-term advisor and will leave following the completion of your First Year. But you are free to visit here whenever you wish."



“She’ll be here?” Hermione asked.

“For the next three hundred days, yes,” Midori replied. “Then she shall leave.”

“But she’s not our advisor?” Harry asked.

Midori shook her head.

---

Dinner was over and the three had a wonderful time with Minnie walking about just how special this school might be. Minnie told them that she was only going to be here for six real days, but she was allowed to attend classes of all sorts to see what and how they taught things and that was worth all of it. Besides, she was here with her favorite children.

At eight that evening, as Time Compression commenced, the residents of their floor were called to the floor Common Room. There were twenty-five students in attendance ranging in age from six to twelve. Their magical adult advisor was Emily Carter, a witch from Australia whose son and daughter were on their floor. Ms. Carter explained that because her charges were all First Year Magicals - even though they ranged in age from six to twelve, they were still too young to live without parental supervision of some kind. The two adults were there to help, she said. She would help with magic and her counterpart would help with non-magic. But people are people. She said they should all feel free to talk with either minder if their had problems.

“I would now like to introduce our non-magical minder,” Ms. Carter said. “She’s a Dentist on holiday who has children here. This is Rose Granger.”

“Mum?” Hermione asked...

A/N: British Airways Non-stop to Tokyo was taken from their current website. Flight Number was changed. There is a connecting flight to



Osaka, but it leaves much later than in this fic. Flight times are the same as in the real world. I do not know if this flight existed in 1988 as it flies over what was then the Soviet Union...



## CHAPTER TWENTY-SIX:

### THE WATANABE SCHOOL

There were twenty-five students assigned to Harry and the others floor. They were told that they were all “Full Term” students meaning they were all signed up for the full ten Terms this summer. The rest of the First Summer English speaking students who had just arrived were only going to be here for two to four Terms before they returned home. Most all would return the following summer to continue their education from where they left off. The families of everyone on this floor had already reserved slots for a Full Term next summer and most for the next two summers.

Of the twenty-five students, there were five sets of siblings, including Harry, Hermione and Clarice. All five sets shared a flat. The others were divided into pairs and assigned rooms. Those students could change flat mates at the end of any Term if they so desired. Ms. Carter and Rose then explained both the school rules and the floor rules. As their adult supervision, they had the authority to award punishments to the same extent as any member of the faculty, but would prefer to help with homework rather than assign detentions. Once everyone had been introduced to everyone else, the kids had free time until lights out at 10:00 (22:00).

One thing both Harry and Hermione noted was that one set of siblings was Steve and Erin McGonagall from New Zealand. They both wondered whether these two kids might be any relation to Aunt Minnie and more specifically, Aunt Minnie’s brother. This minor mystery would be pursued at a later date as it was more pressing to find out why Rose was here.

“Mum?” Hermione asked, “what are you doing here?” Her tone was that of genuine curiosity and a hint of surprise, as opposed to accusation.

“Well,” Rose replied, “Let’s just say I had my first huge magical adventure!”

“What do you mean, Mum?”



“Well, it all began the night before you lot left to come here,” Rose began. “I know that to me you would only be gone a month, but I also know that you would come home changed in a way.”

“Mum? Changed? We don’t get older here.”

“Not physically, although Harry will probably grow a few inches once his potions start kicking in as that is not a true function of his age. But you three will be four years older in your heads, won’t you? You’ll have four years of experiences that I would have missed. And you’re all so young. I didn’t want to miss that, Sweetie. I wanted to be here for you when and if you needed me. In a couple of summers, it might not be that big a deal, but right now it is.

“Anyway, Aunt Minnie had a plan that would allow me to be here where I am needed. You see, when she met Gendasan, the Dean of Admissions here, he told her about the Floor Mentors and she naturally volunteered. She said I could as well because there’s always a non-magical as well.”

“Wasn’t it too late?”

“If you view time as linear,” Rose said.

“You didn’t! You went back in time?”

Rose nodded. “Minnie’s family had its own magical device called a Time Turner. She loaned it to me and I went back about three weeks not long after you three left to come here. I contacted the school, and they agreed to have me as they were short a couple of non-magicals. A couple of days later, I was on the flight here.”

“Did Daddy know?”

Rose nodded. “He agreed it was a good idea.”

“I mean, did he know before? Did you?”



“No,” Rose said. “Once I went back in time, I went somewhere where I knew I would not accidentally run into you, or Daddy or anyone I knew, at least until I could come here.”

“Where was that?”

“Paris.”

“So you’ll be with us the whole time?” Harry asked.

“No. I mean I’ll be here at the school the whole time. But you will have your flat and I have my own - feel free to visit, by the way. I also have twenty-two other students to watch over. But I would love to share our real days touring this beautiful city. If that’s alright with you.”

“Thanks Mum,” Hermione said hugging her mother. “I’m so glad I won’t have to miss you!”

---

Sensei had thought he knew a lot about the school. He had, but he soon learned that what he did not know could fill a book. He was quite familiar with time compression, having used that kind of magic before or rather his Creator had. He had used it in a cave. Just like here, he gained years of research without the corresponding years of aging and as he was alone in his research into how to change the past and as his and his Hermione’s theory for time travel was never tried before, he needed those years. First to perfect his version of magical energy temporal displacement and then to perfect the Avatar. He always wondered how a Time Compression ward would work outside of a building or cave.

It turned out, it only affected magical life or non-magicals who wore a special charm at all times. Non-magical plants and animals did not undergo time compression, so for the trees and shrubs in the many gardens, they would experience 30 days and never be starved for either sunlight or water, unless the entire city was. The students, meanwhile, would experience fifty days for every real twenty four hour period. Time compression began promptly at eight o’clock (or



2000 Hours) real time on June 29th and ended with the students' first real day beginning at eight o'clock (0800 Hours) on June 30th. Their real days when they were not under time compression ran from 0800 to 2000 Hours each real day.

The summer was broken down into ten Terms, each Term lasting three real days and fifty school days. Two Terms equaled one academic year. The first three days of each Term were devoted to "orientation." Real Day One of each term then included six full weeks of classes with six days of class and one day off, then an additional three days of class before a time compressed day off and the next real day off. Real Day Two started with a time compressed day off followed by another six full weeks of class, then five class days followed by another time compressed day off and the "dawn" of their next real day off. Real Day Three again began with a time compressed day off, then five full weeks of class plus an additional three days. Then came six days for end of term exams, followed by the end of term break: four time compressed days off and their next real day before the beginning of the next term.

The students were encouraged to keep three different calendars. One was of their real days. The school calendar did not have dates or days, just numbers. Day 1 began as soon as time compression locked down. The days for their summer ran from Day 1 until their last real day which was Day 1500. All events, classes and official schedules used the school calendar. But the students were also encourage but not required to keep a third, fake calendar. That calendar began on "fake day" Friday, June 29th, 1988, School Day 1, and ran forward through "fake day" September 12th, 1992, School Day 1500. This allowed the students to celebrate their "intellectual" birthdays, as well as "fake" Christmas or other holidays depending upon their various beliefs. However, if "fake" Christmas fell on a class day, they still had to attend class. Students were encouraged to write home on their days off and were also encouraged to keep up with their studies so that their day off was really that - a day without studying where they could be kids.

The children's first Orientation saw them undergo medical and magical examinations. They were fitted for their wands if they did not already have one. Some of the older students did. They received their



various uniforms, athletic togs, school supplies and course books. They could wear their own regular clothes on their days off, but for classes and exams, they were in school uniforms.

They also sat for placement examinations for their non-magical courses. Once these exams were completed and scored, they were sorted into their "Class". There were over 400 children of various ages being sorted. They were divided first by native language and second by their non-magical academic year. Harry, Hermione and Clarice all tested in to Third Year non-magical, much to Hermione's annoyance. But the school did not start on even numbered years, thus the students were sorted into either first, third, fifth or seventh year non-magical studies. The three were assigned to English Track 88-2. 88-1 were those students who tested into first year non-magical studies and 88-4 were those who tested into seventh year non-magical studies. These were the two smallest classes in their year. 88-1 had twelve students and 88-4 had eight. 88-3 had twenty-five students and 88-2 (Harry, Hermione and Clarice's group) was the largest with thirty students. They were told their class rankings would be with their Track for non-magical studies, but with their entire year regardless of language group for magical studies and athletics.

Out of the seventy-five new English speaking students, the three were the only ones from the British Isles. The rest were from Canada, the United States, Australia, New Zealand and other English speaking countries. What Sensei did not know was that well over half of all of these First Year Students would leave after the Second Term. Most of 88-4 would stay as would about one third of 88-3. None from 88-1 would stay the full summer and only ten from 88-2, including his three charges would stay for all five years. The students who would leave were sent here because their parents could not bare to send them away to boarding school for much of the year or because there was no magical school where they lived. The ones who stayed, mostly older ones, did so in most cases because their families had their own business or farmed and it was far more convenient to educate them quickly than to wait for them to grow up normally. Once they completed school, they might apprentice for a few years or go right into their family's business. The students who left would be replaced by students who had already completed magical studies to



that level the previous summer. Thus, every academic Year would see new students, at least new to Harry and the others.

The course scheduled looked hard, Sensei thought. His charges were seven and eight years of age. Their class days began at 6:00. That was the earliest they were allowed to be out of their flat. Breakfast was served from 6:30 until 7:50 and was the longest meal of the day. Students could sleep in if they wanted, but most awoke and the second summer students and older usually were out on the grounds for a workout before showers and their morning meal.

Classes began at 8:00 each morning and there were four fifty minute periods between then and lunch. Classes resumed at 1:00 and there were five possible periods, although for Harry and the others, they had no academic classes after 4:00. Their schedule allowed them two free periods each academic day.

As "First Years" they were taking twelve courses, six non-magical and six magical. Their non-magical courses were: Arts, Culture and History, English, Japanese, Math and Sciences. English and Math met three hours each week while the rest were two hours. Their magical courses were Astronomy (taught from both a magical and non-magical perspective), Charms, Defense (where they were also going to be taught mind magics), Herbology, Potions and Transfiguration. Herbology and Astronomy met two hours a week and the rest were three hours a week.

After regular classes ended at 4:00, the next two hours were for physical training. They had three lessons a week. General Physical fitness, which began with swimming lessons, and two lessons a week in the martial arts. Their required course was Aikido, a style of dodging and using an attacker's moves against them. They then had a choice between either Japanese style Karate or Korean Style Taekwondo, for unarmed fighting. Thus, three days a week they spent two hours in their physical training courses and the other three they had that two hours off to do with as they pleased.

Dinner began at 6:30 and was over an hour later. The students then had until 10:00 before mandatory lights out for the First Years. Still, for the first four Terms, that meant they had at least thirty-three hours



a week for homework, not including their day off and as the school goal was one half hour of homework per hour of class, that meant they still had a fair bit of free time if they managed themselves well. And as Harry and Clarice learned very early, Hermione was all about time management. As tight as their schedule seemed, there was still plenty of time to be a kid.

---

Minerva and Rose entered what looked like a conference room. It was the first week of classes and as mentors or minders or whatever other terms might apply to their positions at the school, they were observing classes. Minerva's charges were in Potions at the moment and Rose's in Maths. They were both a little surprised that they had been called out. Before them sat two wizards and a witch and they were both asked to take a seat.

"I am Professor Kimura," the wizard in the center stated. "I teach at the University, College of Healing. To my left is Professor Nakajima, who is head of our Dark Arts Studies program..."

Minerva gasped.

"Relax. It is merely part of our Masters Defense. To defeat such Arts, one must know about them."

"Gaijin," Professor Nakajima huffed.

"Wh-what's that?" Rose asked.

"My esteemed colleague thinks little of the Defense courses taught in Europe and particularly in Britain. As you would say, bloody useless rubbish."

"There are reasons why Dark Lords have not arisen anywhere in this part of the world or the Americas in centuries," Professor Nakajima said. "And reasons why once every generation or so one does arise in Europe. Ignorance of the threat is among them."



“Finally,” Professor Kimura continued, “this is Professor Takai. She heads our Masters Studies Program in Ritual Magic.”

“This is about that Horcrux thing, isn’t it?” Rose asked.

“Horcrux?” Professor Nakajima replied. “I am aware Dr. Granger that you are non-magical but was unaware that one such as you might know of such a vile thing.”

“I’ve been told of them.”

“Indeed? And why would that be?”

“There are some back home who suspect that Harry may have been accidentally made into one.”

Professor Nakajima laughed for several seconds. “I am sorry,” he said after a time. “I find the British sense of humor amazingly droll.”

“Erm,” Rose said, “we really were told that.”

Professor Nakajima huffed. “Why am I not surprised then,” he growled. “The more enlightened amongst us believe your government’s classifications of Dark Magic to be ignorant in the extreme and your ban on all knowledge about such magics a fool’s folly that gave rise to your last Dark Lord. While I will concede a Horcrux is Dark as it requires a human to be sacrificed to achieve its creator’s ends, to ban all relevant knowledge about it? Foolishness.”

“We are here to determine what really happened to your Harry,” Professor Kimura. “I can understand your concerns, as he has a parasitic dark soul affixed to him, his scar being the parasite’s physical manifestation. But I defer to my colleague here as to what it cannot be. We have already ruled that out as a possibility, fortunately.”

“Fortunately?”



“Were he actually to be a horcrux,” Professor Nakajima said, “there is but one way to remove his dark invader. Well, many ways. But the results are regrettable as he would have to die.”

“We were told an act of pure love...”

“Ah! The Yin and Yang? An act of pure hate and malice to create and an act of pure love to destroy, yes? Regrettably, such is not the case. To destroy those vile things, they must be destroyed both magically and physically. But that’s neither here nor there as it is quite impossible that young Harry is a horcrux.”

“How can you be so sure?” Minerva asked. “Our own Albus Dumbledore suspects he is. He believes it may have been an accident, but none the less...”

Professor Nakajima laughed again. “I can assure you, Madam, it is impossible to create one of those things by accident and it is likewise impossible to create one within a living thing.

“To make a horcrux, one must first have prepared the vessel in which he seeks to store his soul anchor. This is a lengthy process that must begin at sunset on the day of the New Moon and continue for twelve hours a day, every day, until the Full Moon reaches its zenith. A final, six hour ritual is necessary for final preparation - one which must be conducted within twenty-four hours of the human sacrifice that would rent the caster’s soul. Even then, the magic used to create the vessel destroys any existing life magic within. This is necessary as a pre-existing life force would not accept a soul fragment. Thus, the magic would have killed the boy before the horcrux was complete.”

“If he’s not one, then why are we here?” Rose asked.

“He’s is not one to the extent that he can serve as an anchor to a disembodied soul,” Professor Nakajima replied. “It does not follow that he cannot be possessed by one.”

“He’s possessed?” Rose asked in shock.



“There is a parasitic soul essence within his scar,” Professor Kimura said. “It is dormant for now. But it is also foreign to him and strong enough that if awakened it could seek to possess him. Obviously, it must be removed.”

“Obviously,” Minerva said dryly.

“Yet,” Professor Takai said, “to determine the most efficient means of removal, we must seek to understand how it came to be there in the first place. Do either of you know the circumstances of his curious scar?”

Minerva nodded. “V-Voldemort tried to kill him when he was a baby. He found Harry’s family despite efforts to protect them. He killed Harry’s parents who tried to defend him. He then tried to kill Harry. Something went terribly wrong as he was destroyed yet all Harry received was that scar.”

“How sure are you of that?” Professor Nakajima asked.

“I’ve seen the Auror’s reports. I regret I have to rely upon them given your disdain for our defense abilities, but...”

“Go on,” Professor Nakajima encouraged.

“The Killing Curse was cast three times in that house by the same wand with same caster’s signature. It was him all three times.”

“Hibarius Decection?”

Minerva nodded.

“Well at least your forensic types are not totally incompetent. Any residual signature on the victims?”

Minerva nodded again. “All three.”

“It’s been seven centuries,” Professor Nakajima began.

“What’s been seven centuries?”



“Do you know if this Voldemort made more than one horcrux?”

“For certain, no. There’s reason to believe he had six on purpose, but no proof.”

“Then the man - if he is one anymore - was a fool! The danger in creating even one of those things is it renders what is left of your soul unstable. In the thirteenth Century, Huan Jiqing - a nasty Dark Wizard of Mongolian descent - created four. His soul was rendered so unstable that he accidentally severed a final bit of himself. It settled into the nearest living thing it could find, his daughter Xihua. She became a most vile witch. They say that the western notions of witches eating children are based upon her own base pleasures. She is said to have consumed children without killing them first.

“The risks of making more than one of those things is well known here. After all, the first confirmed Horcrux was made by the wizard for the first Emperor of China who was obsessed with immortality. That was well over two thousand years ago. Huan’s Case was well studied. We believe what happened was when he tried to kill someone, a part of his weakened remaining soul separated from what little was left and sought a new home - his daughter. There were also wars here in this country with similar Dark Wizards seeking such perversions. Their cases are even more well documented as unlike Huan, they had apprentices.

“The soul fragment attaches itself to the nearest human - assuming it can find one before it dissipates forever, which is only a matter of seconds. Once it is fixed within the other human, it remains dormant for years. But it can be awakened and when awakened, it will seek to become the dominant one within its host. No, it’s former self will never return. But the essence of evil that was its birth will consume its host.”

“So he’s in danger?”

“For now, no,” Professor Kimura said. “He is too young for his parasite to awaken and will be for some time. But, it should be removed as soon as conveniently possible.”



“Why?” Rose asked.

“Even dormant, it will inhibit his own magical growth unless he is not unlike his possessor. Harry is most unlike his possessor and his magic is poison to it. It will defend itself for now by not letting his magic grow too strong. While the inhibitions are years away from becoming detectably manifest, the sooner we remove it the better.”

“And preferably before he starts learning the Patronus Charm,” Professor Nakajima added. “There are references to that magic accelerating the awakening of the demon lurking within.”

“The Patronus...?” Rose began.

“When would that be?” Minerva asked.

“Fifth Term” Professor Nakajima said. “Sooner would be wiser, though.”

“When and how?” Rose asked.

“When is when we determine his magical growth treatment has reached its full extent. Third Term at the earliest,” Professor Kimura said.

“How is an ancient ritual designed to remove a demon possession,” Professor Takai added. “But we will need two virgins of the opposite sex whom he trusts and loves. Need not be romantic. A trusted and loved sister works...”

“And what are they for?” Rose asked.

“They would serve as his anchor both in the physical and magical sense. He lies on the table and one lies on either side and holds him down. The three must be naked as skin to skin contact is necessary as the anchors are channels for the ritual magic and any barrier between them and the other is blocked by fabric. Skin is a magical conductor because it is alive and similar. Fabric, being dead is not. I understand that the mores of your people are not comfortably with



nudity. We are not so inhibited as you. Families bathe together in bathhouses and fabric is considered a contamination of the bath. Sumo wrestlers wear little more than thongs and yet this is also acceptable here. We can ease their potential discomfiture with blindfolds as they need not see. They still must be awaked and aware for it to work.”

“And will it?” Rose asked.

“It should.”

“When should we tell them?”

“Do they know about your Horcrux theory?” Professor Nakajima asked.

Rose nodded.

“Then this is certainly no worse. Tell them when you see fit.”

“It might actually lift a burden from Harry to know this,” Professor Kimura added.

“But,” Professor Takai said, “there is no hurry. Let Harry get as better as he can be before we try. Moreover, let him not be worried about this so he can focus on his studies.”

Minerva and Rose nodded in agreement.

---

Rose and Minerva hated not telling. But they decided it was best not to tell Harry and the others yet - unless they asked. The courses were not easy and certainly not for children their ages. Yet surprisingly the kids seemed to be adapting well as were all those on Rose’s floor. Why add stress that was ages away? Rose loved being there for them and for their floor mates. The first real test of the floor came during their second week when Clarice’s “fake” seventh birthday arose. Rose was surprised as the entire floor held a surprise party for



her. Harry and the others had gone to the school shops to buy her gifts and she was floored! True, most of the gifts were inexpensive and much of it was candy of which Rose disapproved on professional grounds, but it was truly the thought that counted.

These three wonderful children now had friends. True, none were closer than the three. But the fact that the whole floor seemed to get along given their ages and such... Well, that was special, Rose thought.

And Rose had to admit, this was top quality education. She attended magical classes and was impressed by the teachers. But not being magical herself, she could not truly judge them. She also attended their non-magical classes and like her charges was beginning to learn Japanese if for no other reason than half of any class was in that language and you could almost understand it in context. This was immersion language training which had been used for years in some places. Still, Rose knew the kids were getting a high quality education.

---

Minerva sat at the back of the First Year Charms class five weeks into the Term. Thus far, the students had not been taught so much as a spell. This was the kind of crap she expected at Hogwarts in Defense, given the history of marginal or worse professors. They had been lectured and read on theory and definitions. Otherwise, they were asked to meditate and such. How could this help, Minerva wondered.

“Right then,” Professor Tanaka said, “can anyone tell me why we’ve been practicing meditation and not real magic all term?”

No one spoke.

“Please? I know you are all disappointed. If you’re not, you would be my first class in thirty years that thought otherwise? No?”

“How many of you have done wandless magic?”



Not a hand raised.

"We have an honor code at this school, children. And you all are lying!"

"Professor?" a student asked.

"Ms. Roberts, are you saying you've never done accidental magic?"

"No Sir, but..."

"But what? Were you using a wand?"

"No, but..."

"So you did use wandless magic!"

"But I didn't intend to!"

"Did you intend for something to happen?"

She nodded.

"And did it?"

"Well, maybe not exactly as ..."

"But it did happen, yes?"

"But I couldn't do it when I wanted to! Only when..."

"When you were desperate?"

She nodded.

"Wands are a great tool," the Professor began. "They allow for great degrees of precision in spell casting and will allow you to cast spells with little ability or effort as compared to not having one. But, rely on this and it becomes a crutch and inhibits your natural talents rather than enhanced it. Your mind exercises over the past weeks were to



help you focus on your magic and concentrate your minds. Magic without mind is weak. Magic with mind is limitless. While there are spells that require wands and incantations, most magic does not if your mind and magic can be controlled and bent to your will.

"Now, Miss Roberts. Here is a feather. Do something to it."

"What?"

"We've discussed many kinds of Charms thus far. Try one. But don't feel you have to. Imagine what you want the feather to do, focus on it and your magic and make it happen."

"I - I can't..."

"You've not even tried," Professor Tanaka said. "Clear your mind of all disbelief, then the feather shall do as you wish."

The girl closed her eyes and within seconds, her feather was flying about the room. She then held her hand up and it came to her and she caught it.

"There now," the Professor said. "That was not so hard. Although we need to work on seeing our work!"

The girl was grinning ear to ear. "It was not hard at all!" she said.

By the end of the class, every student was making their feathers fly about the room until they called them back.

"Right then! Excellent!" Professor Tanaka exclaimed. "Now whose feather did everything you wanted it to do?"

No one raised a hand.

"Wandless magic is less precise yet more flexible than wand magic. With your wand, your feather would go wherever you wanted it to. Without one, it just goes until you want it to stop. We will discuss the differences over the remainder of the term as we learn the differences in magics. Class dismissed!"



The next day, Harry, Hermione and Clarice had the same lecture and the same results and loved it.

The same lessons for spell casting occurred in Transfiguration.

“Just turn it into something else,” Professor Higamura said to the boy staring at his feather.

“What?”

“Your call.”

The boy closed his eyes and the feather slowly turned into a pen. “Whoa!” the boy said!

“Is that what you wanted?” Professor Higamura asked.

“My pen’s been dodgy all lesson and this one’s brilliant!” the boy said.

“Right then, all of you...”

Minerva watched in awe as these young and untrained witches and wizards mastered skills even she had problems with. She learned that Harry and his Flatmates were really impressive with these lessons.

“Tanakasan,” Minerva asked after observing his class and not without a degree of jealousy, “can I ask why you and others teach meditation and wandless magics? Why a wand at all?”

“Please, Minerva,” Tanaka said, “Can I call you that?”

Minerva nodded.

“Then I am Bill. I was born in Hawaii. Anyway, Europeans seem bound to their sticks. Wands have their uses. Precision, delicacy, accuracy and focused power being among them. But every witch and wizard begins as a wandless one and all that limits that potential is imagination and laziness. Less power is required for a wand spell



than a similar wandless one. But less knowledge of a specific spell is required for wandless magic. None in fact.

“The biggest flaw in your system is that you rely on wands and don’t start teaching any magic before a child is eleven. Magically, you start teaching just as they enter puberty and only a few years before their maturation without training shuts them off from all possibilities. Ninety percent of all witches and wizards should be competent at wandless and non-verbal spell casting. How many are in a wand driven culture? One that does not teach until it is almost too late? Far less.

“Your culture is wand dependant. For us it is merely a tool. We teach so as they no not have to rely upon it, but can use it to their maximum ability. Eighty percent of OWL and NEWT level spell casting requires no wand and students taught that way can get Exceeds without ever having held a wand - except in defense where the best duelists combine the two techniques to shield and attack. We teach incantations only for the handful of precession spells that require it. Silent spell casting is why we Japanese can live amongst Muggles. They can never see us for our real magic. They never see us cast. They only see the results. So as you can see...”

Each of the children loved all their classes, but each had their own favorite even though they did well in all. Hermione loved Transfiguration. Clarice was Miss Charms. Harry was torn between Defense (although so far that was pretty mundane) and Potions. (even though they were still doing little more than preparing ingredients.)

“It’s like cooking,” Harry said. “You need the right stuff prepared the right way before you even begin to mix them together for it to work! And you need to know why this works with that but not with the other thing. It’s brilliant!”

“Says the boy who can’t burn toast,” Hermione huffed. “Honestly! Just follow the directions and...”

“And you are limited to the author’s view,” Harry said. “They’re not all perfect, you know.”



“You can do better?”

“Well, at least I won’t be totally self-taught. Potions is not something to do by trail and error. Really, neither is cooking, but at least you can’t blow up the house if you really make a mistake. But, yeah. Given time and understanding of how it all works, I think I can!”

Harry was running a Potions Study Group well before the first Real Day and Hermione and Clarice were in it. Harry would help anyone, regardless of need as he was considered the best in this class. His marks, thus far, supported the opinions. He was also good a defense, but they were not dueling yet which was what everyone wanted to do...

One thing was soon certain to both Minerva and Rose. Their children loved this school. They were making friends and having the time of their lives together. Their own relationships with each other were blossoming. It was clear that Harry and Hermione were very close. They held hands as if on instinct. It was also clear that they were close with Clarice. She still had issues with losing her parents and every once in a while it overwhelmed her and she was reduced to tears, only to find her brother and surrogate sister holding her and reminding her there were still people out there who loved her.

Rose was glad she made the choice to come. She could see her children (as she thought of all three now) were still their ages. But she would not have missed the changes she saw in them thus far for anything. She was still their mother and yet was giving them space. And as the first Real Day approached and they invited her to tour the city with them, she realized they still wanted to be with her too. Real Days would become her days with her kids and they with her. And at least until she left, Minnie would be a part of their Real Day Explorations of Kyoto.



## CHAPTER TWENTY-SEVEN: UPDATES AND PROGRESS

THURSDAY, JULY 7 1988 - ST. MUNGO'S HOSPITAL FOR MAGICAL MALADIES AND INJURIES, LONDON, U.K.

Sirius sat at the table with the stacks of letter he received from Kyoto. Since July 2nd, he had been receiving thrity-five letters a day from Kyoto, seven each from Minerva, Rose, Harry, Hermione and Clarice. The nice thing about the kids letters were they were usually short, although not always. Each kid had celebrated their first fake birthdays and fake Christmas together with Rose, Minnie and the other kids on their floor. Harry's letters were long about that as he had never had a birthday of Christmas before and even though he knew these were not real, it was still very special to him. It was letters like that which made Sirius wish the Dursleys were still alive, if only so he could kill them.

The door opened and Sophie walked in.

"More letters?" she asked.

"Still going through yesterday's mail, can you believe it?" Sirius replied. "Haven't even gotten today's yet."

"Why do you look sad about it, Siri?"

"They might have received three letters from me, Soph. Maybe four. That's it. They celebrated their birthdays and what I'm reading now is about Harry's first real Christmas, even though it really isn't. I mean I am out of that place and a free man and I feel I am still a lousy godfather."

"Siri, when they get back you have ages to make it up to them."

"I just feel..."

"I'm sure they understand, Love. Do they sound like they don't think you care?"



“That’s just it. No. Even Hermione writes me very nice letters. I almost feel as if I am there with them learning things and going to all those interesting places they’ve been seeing on their Real Days. I got enough pictures of them and what they’ve seen to fill an album. I just wish I could be there with them.”

“There’s always next year, Love. Surely the school could use a magical minder.”

“But then I’d have to leave you...”

Sophie giggle. “My we are sure of ourselves! You’re not even out of hospital yet and you’re already planning my life?”

“Um - I see your point.” Sirius sad somewhat dejectedly. The truth was he kind of did hope that a year from now his decisions would be their decisions. Odd that, he thought. I haven’t even told her what I think I feel about her.

He was not paying attention to Sophie as he now thought he might have pressed too hard, even if only by accident. He came back to reality when he felt a warm weight settling into his lap and a pair of arms encircling his neck. He looked up into her captivating blue eyes, mere inches from his and watched helplessly as they closed and as she moved closer for a long, tender kiss.

“What was that for?” Sirius asked.

“Didn’t you like it?” Sophie pouted.

Sirius nodded. “A lot. Want more. But why?”

She kissed him again, just to let the point sink in.

“The first one was for thinking we will be together a year from now, and the second one was for being so damned cute.”

“I am not cute! Blokes are not ...” he was not allowed to finish as she was kissing him yet again, this time with more passion.



This time when she finished she pulled Sirius into a hug. "I want to be together a year from now," she whispered, "and every year after that."

"That would be nice," Sirius said. "But why?"

She leaned back and looked into his eyes. "You really that thick?" she quipped. "I've fallen in love with you, silly."

Sirius knew in the past he would have been out the door and running for his life. Not now. Not with her. He kissed her this time. "Sophie," he said softly, "I've never ... I want to ... I want to say it, but this is not the right place."

"Why not?" Sophie asked. "It's where we met. It's where I fell for you and where...unless you don't?"

"I love you too, Sophie," Sirius said earning another searing kiss.

Their blissful moment was broken up by someone else clearing their throat. The two looked up and saw Remus, Robert and Minerva had entered the room.

"I would say you two should get a room," Remus chuckled, "but it seems Sirius has one already. Sorry for the intrusion."

"Minerva!" Sirius said. "Welcome back? How was Japan? How are Harry and Clarice and Hermione and Rose?"

"Is she just going to sit there?" Minerva said looking at Sophie who blushed.

"Sophie has learned that my lap is far more comfortable than any chair in this room and I am not about to argue with her on that point. Besides, I like her chosen seat."

Minerva shrugged.

"Well?" Sirius asked.



"Japan is wonderful," Minerva began. "Rose and I were with the kids in and around Kyoto during their real days. It's a beautiful city and the kids love seeing the shrines, temples, palaces, museums, gardens and such. They've also taken to shopping."

"Shopping?"

"A place called Nishiki near the food marked off Shigo Street. It's Kyoto's version of Diagon Alley. They went there the first real day they had to buy presents."

"Presents?"

"You know they celebrate their school birthdays and Christmas and such?"

Sirius nodded.

"Well, they go twice a year or once a term to buy presents for each other and for their friends and ... oh, they bought me such lovely gifts for Christmas and my School Birthday." Minerva blew her nose. "They really do have good taste in such things. Hard to believe when you consider that until they met, not one of them ever had a friend. Now, they have loads of them."

"Clarice has a Birthday coming up," Robert noted, "a real one, yes?"

Minerva nodded. "Their floor is going to climb Mt. Fujiyama for her Birthday. She learned that you get a walking stick at the bottom and as you hike up you pass several shrines. At each shrine, the stick is branded with Kanji - that's a Chinese character the Japanese adopted long ago. Everyone gets that, but as magicals, their sticks have a magical core and the brands are similar to runes and..."

"Staves?" Remus asked.

"Very similar," Minerva said. "They'll be able to cast spells with their walking sticks, if they make it to the top. The stave is not activated unless they have all the brands and they did not use any magic to reach the summit. But yes, that is their goal. It will act as a conductor."



It will draw natural magic to it allowing the magical to cast spells without tiring, although they'll only be able to use one hand. Still..."

"Bloody hell," Sirius said. "Kids with staves?"

"This is a problem?" Robert asked.

"Wands and staves are all purpose tools," Remus said. "The main difference is a wand is powered by the user's own magic. A staff is powered by the ambient magic all around us. A staff is an order of magnitude more powerful. If a wand is like a rifle, a staff is like artillery. While not useful in a close fight 'cause it limits the user's mobility, it is magic's only long range weapon and if its owner can learn to control it, it can be quite powerful. A staff can break any spell cast by a wand and no wand can break a spell cast by a staff, not easily. A staff user can erect powerful and nearly impenetrable wards and break curses no wand user could hope to break. And this is without regard to the power of the wizard with the staff. That's why they're illegal here. Oh, you can own one. You just cannot buy one or sell one."

"It'll be a long time before they can use those sticks, Robert," Minerva said. "They have a lot of magic to master before those sticks become usable."

"And the Japanese pass these out to kids?" Robert asked.

"The Japanese magicals lack most all the prejudices our countrymen have. If most people have or can get a staff, it's not that big a deal. One thing I have learned is we British magicals are a pathetic lot compared to much of the world. We don't teach half of what the kids will be learning over there because the inbred purebloods who run this country cannot or will not learn it. To allow others to learn would undermine their grip on society."

"For example?"

"We don't teach wandless magic," Minerva replied. "You can't pass out of first year there unless you can do wandless magic to an acceptable level. We don't teach mind magic, yet it is a required part



of their studies. Maybe half of the magic they are learning we would consider Dark. It's not. It's just a part of the Pureblood plot to keep the rest of us weak. We teach our students to the minimum ICW standards. They expect much more from their students and Harry, Clarice and Hermione are getting a far better education there than they could ever hope to achieve here. I come back ashamed of this country, Robert. I come back confident that you and Rose did the right thing sending them there to learn."

"How are they doing?" Robert asked.

"Excuse me?" Minerva said.

"In their classes?"

"They finished First Year one, two and three in their class. Not across the board, but overall. Hermione, Harry and Clarice. And there was not a lot of separation between them at all."

"And they have friends?" Sirius quipped.

"They are not selfish, Sirius. They help anyone who asks for it. It was amazing to hear about from Rose. I was a monitor on another floor and though I visited them often, I was not there like Rose was. By the end of the first term, all the students studied in the main study hall for their floor 'cause Harry, Hermione or Clarice would be there to help. Those twenty-five kids are a tight knit group."

"And how are they getting along?" Robert asked. "I mean Rose says a lot in her letters, but..."

"They've had their spats," Minerva shrugged. "Not many and not for long. They're too close to let things get to them too much. Clarice had a time of it at first. She was still dealing with the loss of her family and although Rose and I were there for her, it was really Harry and Hermione that held her when she was crying and pulled her through. She's really grown to look up to them and they've grown to really care about her."

"And Harry and Hermione?"



"The other students call them the Boyfriend and Girlfriend. It's a bit of an exaggeration, but as compared with most the other students their age, it is apt."

"Apt?" several voices asked.

"They hold hands a lot and are not embarrassed by it," Minerva said. "They are almost always together. At first, the other kids did not know what to make of it, but now it's a part of the school landscape so if they were not together, that might raise eyebrows. But, they are not truly involved in the romantic way. They are still too young for that. Still. Unless something happens, Robert, some years from now I can see them..."

"As long as it really is some years from now," Robert said. "Do they ... do they seem happy?"

Minerva nodded. "I think all three of them have finally found acceptance and their place in life. I knew Hermione before and she's never been like she is now. I've never seen her smile and laugh the way she does now. And her hair is looking wonderful - although Clarice said that was because someone upset her about it and Harry decided to try and fix the problem."

"How?"

"According to Clarice, he's taken to brushing her hair at night. Hermione never bothered apparently. Clarice says they both find that relaxing in a way and her hair is looking much better."

"Any other changes?" Robert asked.

"Harry's six inches taller than before."

"What?"

"The growth potions were effective. He's now noticeably taller than Hermione."



“Wow!” Sirius said. “And I thought putting on forty pounds of muscle was impressive!”

“You’re still not back to your appropriate weight, Luv,” Sophie chided.

“Yes Dear.”

Remus could not help but chuckle and yet was pleased for his friend. Padfoot is so whipped, he thought. But this Sophie is such an angel. He deserved that after the hell he went through.

“And where are they going from here?” Robert asked.

“They are allowed to pick up another language in non-magical studies Second Year,” Minerva said. “We discussed that, but I don’t know what they selected. They were thinking about Spanish because that is spoken in a lot of countries, but we’ll see what they took. We also discussed their magical electives that they pick up third year. I recommended Arithmancy, Ancient Runes and Ritual Magic.”

“Dark Magic?” Sirius asked.

“Just ‘cause it’s banned here does not make it Dark,” Minerva replied. “It will be a ritual that will release the evil possessing Harry and there are rituals that can aid in his destiny,” she added cryptically as she was not sure what Sophie knew. “Dark is about intent and nothing more.”

Sirius seemed to accept the explanation for now.

“And Sensei?” Remus asked.

“Ah, the mysterious bald old git from the future whom I’ve never met,” Sirius added.

“He’s with them,” Minerva said. “Appears once a week their time. Though it’s not like before.”

“How so?” Robert asked.



“Well, he just tells stories and such. He’s a great story teller and all, but... Well I asked him and he said their studies are now more important than anything he could teach them right now. His lessons will resume after they return.”

“He really is an odd duck,” Robert said. “Then again, were it not for him, so many things would never have happened. Hermione is happy?”

Minerva nodded.

“Remind me to thank Sensei next time I see him. Now, there’s some other things I think we need to discuss...”

JULY 8, 1988 - SCHOOL DAY 447 - WATANABE SCHOOL OF MAGICAL STUDIES, KYOTO JAPAN

Rose had brought Harry, Hermione and Clarice to the University side of the Campus. While they had all been here before, they had never actually gone into a building that was not a museum - as all the museums were here. They were now seated in an office they had never been in before and were soon joined by a Japanese witch.

“Good Evening,” the witch said in Japanese. By now, the four of them could understand. “I am Professor Takai. I teach Ritual Magics. I assume you know why you are here?”

Harry nodded. “It’s because of the evil spirit beneath my scar.” He responded in Japanese.

Professor Takai nodded. “I need not tell you, Harry, but it must be removed and we have decided tonight is the night. There will be a Ritual performed outside our shrine which should remove the spirit from you. But there are risks.”

“I understand, Professor,” Harry said.

“Do you really?”

“There is a risk my spirit will be removed as well.”



"We'd hate to lose you, Harry," Professor Takai said. "Have you been told what this Ritual entails?"

"No Professor."

And Professor Takai explained the ritual, much to the discomfort of Harry and his Girls, as he know thought of his sister and best friend.

---

Harry had yet to understand some of the magics of Time Compression. Real Time it was around or maybe even after dawn, and yet here he stood outside the Pagoda like Shrine before a wooden table and it was as dark as a night could be. The stars and the moon were all the light there was. He was wearing a set of robes and nothing else. He knew Hermione and Clarice were similarly attired.

"To ease your discomfiture," a voice said in Japanese, "you and your anchors will be blindfolded."

Harry nodded. He really did not want to see his sister naked and was certain he did not want Hermione to see him naked - again - yet. Almost as soon as the blindfold was in place, Harry felt his robe fall away. A pair of gentle hands now rested on his shoulders and he felt oddly calm, if chilled by the night air. He felt something wet touch him. He knew this was the ink brush as he was told that the witches or wizards who would perform the purification ritual would begin by painting runes on his body and the bodies of his sister and best friend. There would runes in two different colors, he had been told. A black rune would be placed on his forehead, chest, back and each arm and leg. A red rune would be placed on each cheek, stomach, thighs and shoulders.

As soon as this was done, he was levitated onto the table. He was shivering with the chill and for a terrible moment felt very alone. Then he was not. He felt two warm bodies with him, one on either side.



They seemed to snuggle in close and tight and he began to feel warm and safe and not alone.

"We're here, Harry," he heard Hermione say to his left.

"We won't let you go," Clarice added.

The chanting began as at least seven different voices began a mantra. Harry listened and soon his world seemed to shrink. All that was left was him and his two girls. He was beginning to enjoy this when he felt a new presence within him stir.

"Stay with us," Clarice said to him.

The presence seemed to materialize in his mind, not unlike Sensei. But while Sensei had always seemed kind and comforting, this presence seemed evil and threatening.

"I have been awakened!" it exclaimed.

"Leave! Go away!" Harry shouted out in his mind.

"And why should I? You are but a boy and weak and I was and will be the most powerful Wizard in the world."

"You don't scare me Voldemort. Leave!" Harry said.

"I think not!" The form of the evil man approached Harry.

"Stay with us Harry," Clarice whispered.

"We've here, Harry," Hermione added. "We will always be here for you, just as you have to be here for us."

The evil being touched Harry and screamed in pain.

Harry screamed in pain. The two girls tightened their hold on him. "Stay with us, Harry. We can't lose you."

"You can't take me," Harry said. "You must leave."



"If I cannot have your body," the evil man said, "neither can you!"

Harry screamed and moaned and tried to thrash about, but the two girls held him down and continued to talk to him as calmly as they could. Their voices betrayed the pain and fear they felt for their brother and friend as he underwent whatever torment that was happening. Suddenly, in his mindscape Harry was no longer alone. Clarice was standing next to him to his right and took hold of his hand while Hermione did the same to his left.

"Three children?" Voldemort asked. "You expect to force me out with children?"

"You cannot have him," Hermione said.

"He's ours!" Clarice added.

Voldemort tried to attack them and was thrown back.

"You might have beaten one soul," Harry said now understanding what was going on. "You cannot beat three. Leave here or be destroyed."

"I will not leave!"

"Then you will be destroyed," Hermione said. Clarice nodded in agreement. "No one and nothing will ever take my brother away from me," she added. "Not you! Not even God himself! Go away!"

"You killed our parents and our families," Harry added. "We think it is time to return the favor."

"Fools! You cannot hope to defeat me!" Voldemort shouted.

"Hope is not part of the equation," Hermione said. "Shall we?"

"Let's," Clarice agreed.

"Go for it," Harry added.



A bright white light filled Harry's mindscape and Voldemort screamed in agony. "A - a soul bond?" he asked when the intense pain subsided.

"For now," Harry said.

"Once you are gone, we will return to ourselves," Hermione said.

"Yeah," Clarice added. "Soul bonding with your brother is just gross."

"Then why are you here?"

"We are here because we love Harry," Hermione said. "Because we love him, we will do what is necessary to save him."

"That means whatever it takes to get rid of mean old men in his head," Clarice said. "LEAVE MY BROTHER ALONE!"

Another bright light burst forth from the two of them followed moments later by a much brighter light from Harry. Had there been an outside witness to this battle, they would have sworn that the two girls were feeding energy into Harry who then released the combined energies at his would be possessor. The pulse hit Voldemort and he screamed in agony and was gone.

Rose watched in awe and terror at the scene. Harry was writhing on the table and the two girls were holding him down and talking to him. Suddenly, they all went still and began to glow. The glow brightened over the next several minutes as the chanting continued around them. Suddenly Harry's body screamed but it was not his voice. As the scream died, a whisp of black looking smoke rose from Harry's forehead. Professor Takai noted this and banished it into oblivion. Rose looked at the three children. They looked like they were asleep. They all had blissful smiles on their faces.

Harry was alone in his head again. As soon as Voldemort vanished, the girls said their goodbyes to him and left his mind. But he could still feel them next to him and he pulled them in to a tighter hug to thank them for all they did for him. They were willing to do that, to take that



risk. Harry remembered being told about the risks. Voldemort had to be awakened in order to be driven out. If Harry could not do it alone, his best friend and sister would soul bond with him to drive the demon out. So many things could have gone wrong. Voldemort could have possessed any or all of them. Even if he was driven out, the bond with Hermione or Clarice might have become permanent, meaning he would have to marry them. The thought of Hermione did not bother him, except for the fact they were far too young. He loved his sister Clarice, but not like that. Fortunately, he knew that the ritual had worked. Voldemort was gone and everyone was back where they were supposed to be. They could be kids again.

---

Second Term of Second Year began and the Students found that they had an extra hour of physical education scheduled. This term, they would learn about magical transport. On the theory side, they were taught about Floos, Portkeys, Apparition and Portals. They would learn the practical side of those next summer.

This summer's practical instruction was on a technique used outside of Europe called Shifting. It was similar to Apparition in that you did not need to enchant an object to make it work. You focused on your desired destination and if you did it right you would be there in seconds. It differed from apparition in many ways. First of all, it required a calm and relaxed mind to work at all. Apparition could be done under the stress of combat with practice. Shifting could not. Another difference was the risk. Shifting either worked or it did not. Apparition had a painful and life threatening middle ground called splinching where part of the person transported and part of them did not. Apparition had a range limit that was determined by the power of the wizard. Shifting, being nature based magic, had unlimited range. A student from Britain could shift from his home to the Watanabe School with ease. To use apparition would require several jumps over several days with rest in between. It was actually faster to fly by Muggle means than to apparate such a vast distance. Also, Apparition did not work over large bodies of water at all. For most witches and wizards, if the land was too far away to see, it was just



too far away to apparate. Shifting had no such limitations. Finally, warding against shifting was all but impossible.

Shifting proved surprisingly easy to master, the kids learned. By the end of Second Year, all students used this method to move between classes on the huge campus, which beat the heck out of running. It seemed most of their first two years had been at a run. They learned that was intentional as they were now in excellent shape physically.

Second Year the three had tried out for sports. All three were on the swim team, although Harry had only just learned how. Harry was a freestyler. Clarice excelled at breast stroke, while Hermione was the best all around swimmer and her results in the pool were the pride of their flat. They also made sports teams. Harry became a striker on a football team. Hermione played Field Hockey, while Clarice was the point guard on her basketball team.

The year ended with the three again at the top of their class. During their end of Term break, they had to decide what electives to take in magical studies. (Non-magical electives began eight year, as in next summer). They followed Minerva's advice and selected Arithmancy, Runes and Ritual Magic. Their experience with ridding Harry of Voldemort's soul fragment would have been enough, but when they learned there were rituals that could do the same thing with an object, well that sealed the deal. They could, in theory, destroy a horcrux in place! Of course, that ritual was Master's Level Defense, still...

Third year began and they found themselves busier than ever with their courses, sports, music and study. Their free time had dropped to at best two hours a day during the week. But as this workload had gradually built up over their time at the school, it did not seem to affect them.

They were so grateful that Rose was here with them. True, she had twenty-two other children to attend to, and she made sure that none of them felt ignored, but having a family member around was wonderful. And of course, Rose spent time with them on their days off and Real days.



Fifty days into their Third Year, the Real Day was also Clarice's real birthday. The entire floor would celebrate as they were all good friends by now. As soon as the Time Compression Ward dropped, twenty-five students and their two floor minders vanished from the school and reappeared at the foot of Mt. Fujiyama, or at least at the start of the trail. They had backpacks with warm clothes and water bottles. They all had their cameras and they stopped at the start and lined up to get their "Fuji Sticks" - the hiking sticks that would become their staves.

It was not an easy climb to the summit, but the entire group had a wonderful time along the way and all of them made it to the top and received their final brands. They spent perhaps an hour enjoying the view before heading down. They were not worried about the time as each of them carried a portkey that would activate to bring them back to the school before the wards went up.

They were back in their floor recreation room when the real party began. They all realized that they were going to need more room in their rooms back home for all the presents they had given each other and would give each other over the summer. Still, Clarice appreciated every present she received from her friends, and from Rose and Mrs. Donovan.

---

The day after the hike of Mt. Fujiyama was a free day for all students. Harry was just cleaning up after breakfast, as he had taken to cooking meals in their flat on free days since the beginning of Third Year. He heard a knock at the door and figured it was probably Rose, although it could really be just about anyone as the students on this floor were so close.

"Somebody get that," Harry said washing a frying pan.

He heard voices at the door and then heard Clarice call out: "Harry! Hermione! They've got news!"



Harry dried off his hands and went into the living area. Hermione was coming from the girls bedroom where she had been writing a letter. In their flat were their four best friends: Steve and Erin McGonagall and Stacey and Lyle Donovan. Steve and Stacey were both eight years old and in their non-magical year. Erin was nine and Lyle ten and were in the non-magical year ahead of them, but they were all in the same magical year. Lyle and Stacey were the son and daughter of the other Floor Minder, Mrs. Donovan.

“Well?” Hermione said.

“Seems you may be right, Cuz,” Erin replied with a smile. “Just heard back from Dad in today’s post.”

“And?”

“Great-Granddad Ben and his entire family - children and grandchildren - left Scotland in 1972,” Erin said. Great-Granddad and his oldest son John and John’s family moved to Canada. His daughter, our Grand Aunt Emily and her family moved to Australia and our Granddad Richard and his family moved to New Zealand. Personally, I think we got the better deal, but that’s just me.

“Anyway, Granddad Richard has confirmed that they left because of the War and because someone was trying to wipe out the entire family. Our branch split up and never contacted the others again, just in case. And yes, Great- Granddad had an older sister named Minerva. Is she still alive?”

“You met her, Erin,” Hermione said. “Though we call her Aunt Minnie.”

“Th-that was her?”

Hermione nodded.

“And you’re her grandniece or something?”

“Her Great-Granddaughter, actually,” Hermione said.



“So we really are cousins?”

Hermione nodded. “Second Cousins to be exact.”

“What happened?”

“Voldemort wanted to wipe us out because Minnie and her daughters were magical heirs to a famous witch line. To succeed, the entire McGonagall line had to be killed off, which was why your family left in all probability. Had he succeeded, the heir would have shifted to your family - probably to your Grand-Aunt and her daughters or granddaughter.”

“Did it shift?”

“No. Although it still can.”

“Why?” Erin asked.

“Cause Hermione is now that magical heir,” Clarice said. “She is the oldest surviving daughter of the oldest surviving daughter.”

“That’s horrible!” Stacey said. “And you two? Are you really related as well?”

“Clarice and I are brother and sister,” Harry said. “Our parents were killed when we were babies and we were sent to live with different families. Can’t say if we are related to Hermione at all.”

“If we are,” Clarice said, “It is distant.”

“Hermione’s real parents were also murdered during the War,” Harry continued. “She was adopted by the Grangers before that happened to keep her safe. Bit of a long story how we came to be a family. Short version is Clarice was adopted, but her parents died and I was left with an Aunt and Uncle who died about the same time. Accidents mostly. No killings. Anyway, Social Services placed us with the Grangers and here we are.”



"That's so sad," Erin said.

Harry and the others nodded in agreement.

"But there was a happy ending," Clarice said. "As sad as it is, my brother and I were reunited and he's the best and we live with our best friend Hermione and her wonderful parents and came here and met all you guys and stuff. I should be sad all the time, but I'm not. Not with Harry, Hermione and the rest of you as friends."

"Guess that makes you honorary cousins," Stacey said.

"What?" Hermione asked.

"Didn't we tell you?" Erin asked. "Mrs. Donovan is my Dad's little sister."

"NO WAY!"

SATURDAY, JULY 16 1988 - ST. MUNGO'S HOSPITAL FOR  
MAGICAL MALADIES AND INJURIES, LONDON, U.K.

The "Gang" was assembled in Sirius's room. They had been meeting a couple of times or more a week since Rose and the kids had left for Japan. Sirius and Sophie, while still not fully intimate - she was not about to risk his recovery for that - were clearly an item and the others agreed they made a cute couple. Remus could not help but tease them mercilessly, but the two gave as good as they got. Robert had grown to like all of these people and Minnie was the matriarch of this group.

"Well?" Sirius asked.

Remus had his interview with the head of Office W earlier in the week.

"They made me an offer," Remus said.

"Brilliant!"



"I start in September with a six-week course and then I'll actually head the Were desk. Bit more than I expected, really."

"You'll be bloody brilliant, Mate," Sirius said.

"And you?"

"Sophie and the others suggest that when I get out I take a few months before I think about work. Not that I need to, still. Think Office W could use another Auror? Really don't fancy working for the bastards who sent me away for all those years."

"They are always looking," Remus said.

"You would do the Service credit," Robert offered.

"Thanks. It's either that or spend all my time with my Godchildren - not that I would mind that at all. So many choices!"

"Do what your heart desires, Love," Sophie suggested.

"If I did that, we'd probably never get out of bed again," Sirius laughed.

"Not that we have done that," Sophie said more for the others than for her Siri, "but you'll here no objection from me."

"Robert?" Minerva said trying to get their meeting back on track, "you said you've heard from Rose about our recommendation?"

"Yep," Robert replied. "There's no way we can send the kids back to school really. They are starting Secondary School - maybe even today. Can't send them back to Infants or Juniors. It would be a waste of their time. So she's in full agreement with our recommendations. Remus?"

"Yes?"

"Think you can make things happen before they return?"



“Need Minnie’s help. She is their legal guardian. Sirius should be able to help too as he told me earlier they are going to release him within the week. Merlin knows why. He was a nutter before he was sent there and I doubt there’s a cure.”“Oi! Watch who you’re calling a nutter, furball!” Sirius shot back.



## CHAPTER TWENTY-EIGHT: BACK TO REALITY

SATURDAY, JULY 16, 1988 - 16 WILLOW WAY, LOUGHTON, ESSEX, U.K.

Sirius had been released from St. Mungo's the day before with a clean bill of health, but orders to put on more weight and preferably in the form of muscle mass. Remus had been saying ever since that the Healer's must have missed something. While he did not doubt their diagnosis as to his physical condition, he chided Sirius that they completely missed in regards to his sanity, as Padfoot was certifiable before he was sent to Azkaban. Sirius retort had been that if that was the case, then perhaps they should rename the prison The Azkaban Institute for Treatment of Nutters, or the Squirrel Cage, as they collect nuts.

Sirius really had no place to go. True he was a free man and Head of an Ancient and Noble House. His family still owned - which meant he owned - several properties, but the only one not let out to a long term tenant was 12 Grimmauld Place London, his childhood home and a place he would rather see burned to the ground than live in ever again. As well as things were going with Sophie, he felt it was too soon to move in with her or vice versa. Remus had an inexpensive one bedroom and Sirius did not fancy sleeping on the couch for the foreseeable future. In stepped Bob Granger.

Over the weeks, the two had become friends. They shared some mutual interests, most notably in three children currently inundating them with letter from Japan, but there were others as well. It turned out Bob was a prankster in his youth, just as Sirius was. The Grangers had a spare bedroom and reluctantly Sirius agreed to stay there for the time being. It was convenient in one respect. Two of the now five adults concerned with the welfare of three young children were living in the same place and the other three could get there far more easily than Robert could get to anywhere else. The five were meeting today to discuss a most recent letter from Rose, which had been in response to a previous letter from Robert.

It might have seemed odd weeks ago, but the presence of Mike Evans and his partner David Greengrass was seemingly normal to



everyone not named Sirius Black or Sophie Tomkins. This was, in fact, the first time the two met the agents from Her Majesty's Government. But as Robert, Minnie and Remus seemed relaxed, the other two followed suit.

"Right then," Robert began. "For those of you who have not heard, the three finished one, two and three in their class in both magical and non-magical studies on the Mid-Year exams. They're over half way done."

"Been taking to my better half," Mike said. "If we could afford it, our younger ones would be there next year. Bloody brilliant from what you have told me."

"Twenty to twenty-five thousand Quid is a bit steep," Dave Greengrass nodded. "And that's just for two terms, not five. But yeah. Sounds better than Hogwarts, but Hogwarts is less expensive."

"It is markedly better in Defense," Minerva added. "That's due to two factors. First, they don't consider nearly as much magic as Dark as we do. More important, their Defense faculty has years in front of a class. For some reason, since about 1960 no professor has stayed on the job in that position at Hogwarts for more than eighteen months. Potions is better, but only because of the quality of instruction. The other spell casting classes are better only because they teach non-verbal and wandless casting practically from day one. Otherwise, they are comparable. The other magical courses are no better and no worse from what I observed."

"The real difference is in their non-magical education. Here, there isn't any. Hermione and the others would have not gone beyond their fifth or sixth year unless they did it on their own. There? The animosity that exists here in Britain towards Muggles is mostly due to ignorance. You should know that Muggle Studies, as we call it, is a required course all seven years on the Continent. Here, it is merely an unpopular elective."

"You told us about a third of all students at that school are from Europe," Remus said.



“About that,” Minerva replied. “Harry, Hermione and Clarice are not just the only ones from Britain, they are the first in almost twenty years.”

“Right then,” Robert said. He had already reached the conclusion that the school was the best thing for the kids even if they would be college graduates or higher before they were twelve. “Rose agrees with our recommendation that we do not return the kids to the normal school in the fall. It would not be fair to them from an educational standpoint. They would be at secondary school level in classes with thirteen and fourteen years old and little Clarice would be seven, Hermione nine. And to send them back to Infants or Juniors? That would be a waste as well. Their age group is still learning arithmetic and according to Rose, they will have a year of Algebra by the time they get back. She thinks the ‘socialization’ issue can be overcome by fostering relationships with magical families rather than through school.”

“And how would you placate the Education Boards?” Mike asked. “Schooling is compulsory here until they are sixteen and they have not disappeared into the magical void yet. They all have records.”

“The school in Japan covers that. Our educational authorities will receive scores for their end of term exams that are based upon either tutored or home schooled examinations,” Robert said.

“M-forges?”

“Arguably, but you did tell me that those are valid.”

“They are. So that issue is a non-issue. Yet how will you deal with them being home all the time?”

Robert was not about to mention Sensei. He knew Sensei had some “projects” for them. He did not know what they were, but the impression he got was that they were not designed to allow idleness. “For now, Sirius has agreed to act as a minder for the kids once Remus starts up with you lot. I’m sure he can keep them busy.”

“Ach!” Minerva said. “They’ll burn the bloody house down, they will!”



“Oi!” Sirius said in protest.

“Next off,” Robert pushed forward, “she also agrees that a more ‘suitable’ living situation is advisable. She likes Minnie’s idea of using one of the Potter properties as they are heavily warded and one in particular is close to our Surgery.”

“The fact that Hyde Park is across the way must have also be a part of it,” Mike chuckled.

“There is that,” Robert agreed. “And there’s the fact that as Muggles, we can live there. It has Muggle services, including cable television, which was a bit of a shock to me.”

“The Estate renovates the place every five years to keep it modern,” Minerva said.

“Rose wonders whether we can be moved before the kids return,” Robert added looking at Sirius and Remus.

“Shouldn’t be a problem moving you out,” Remus said.

“You may want to wait until they return to ‘move in’,” Sophie said. “I am sure your wife will have ideas in that regard.”

Robert nodded in agreement. “One major argument in favor is the place is bloody huge. Sirius and Remus for that matter could live there in their own flats for all practical purposes. Plenty of privacy,” Robert added winking at Sirius and Sophie who blushed at the veiled suggestion. “So. Any objections?”

There were none.

FRIDAY, JULY 29, 1988 - SCHOOL DAY 1477 - WATANABE  
SCHOOL OF MAGICAL STUDIES, KYOTO JAPAN

Sensei watched in his invisible form as Harry and the rest of the class sat ashen face after what even he would have considered the most terrifying Defense Class on record. True, the students faced



simulations. The terrifying beasts and wizards were not real, but they seemed quite real and quite deadly. Bloody hell, Sensei thought, if this was real, the Tri-wizard tournament was child's play! Under the circumstances, Sensei would have passed the whole class and was pleased that Professor Nagano had done so. Still ... it was something to behold.

"You did well, Class," the Professor said (in Japanese). "So what have we learned today?"

"They're can be some really terrifying shit out there?" a student asked.

"Indeed," the Professor sighed. "Having again proved that to ask a dumb questions one must expect a dumb answer, even if it is honest. Try this then: What is the nature of courage?"

"The absence of fear?" a girl asked. Sensei felt she was borderline. She stood and fought but would have broken had the two on either side of her been killed or injured.

"It is the acceptance of fear," Harry said.

"Explain," the Professor continued.

"We knew this was not real, yet it was so real," Clarice added. "It was terrifying and yet - and yet we dealt with it."

"Very good. The warrior who says they fear not the coming battle is a fool. Fear is. You cannot hide from it. Courage is that part of character that prevents fear from consuming you. You want to curl into a ball and hope it all goes away, but you don't. You stand your ground and make it go away if you can. That is courage. To push through even when all seems hopeless, that is true courage. Fear is a part of life. It is how we deal with it - not how we ignore it - that defines the warrior. I am expecting great things from the lot of you when you sit your O.W.L.s in about two weeks. Overcome your fear and achieve your potential. Class dismissed."

Sensei remembered back to the time of the original Harry - assuming it was, because once time travel or time messaging, which was a



better explanation of his existence proved possible, there was not real telling if his Creator was the original Harry Potter, or just another failed attempt. Odd that, Sensei thought. I might not even be a first! Harry after Harry may have sent me after me back to no avail. Then again, there is or was or will be not evidence of that. Damn does time suck!

But, this timeline was surely different. Sensei had to admit that aside from wandless magic and skills that were considered either unnecessary (mind magics) impossible to teach (wandless magic) or dark (several spells and ritual magic), in theory this school was not better than Hogwarts in terms of the scope of magic taught up to N.E.W.T. level. The overall quality of education was better where the two schools stood otherwise on equal stead. Then again, that was due more to the caliber of the overall faculty and lack of outside interference than anything else. McGonagall, Flitwick, Lupin and Sprout from his time would fit in well here. Most of the other professors he knew from his timeline would not. As this Harry was not taking Care of Magical Creatures, he had no real way to gage the Professors of that subject against Hagrid and, at this time, there was not real way to gage. Hagrid was just the groundskeeper and “game warden” for now and in the “original” timeline, he was not slated to become a professor until September of 1993, six years from now. As this Harry had not opted for that course...

Practically from the beginning of their Fifth O.W.L. year in magical studies (School Day 1204), the spell casting classes for the kids began introducing them to stave magic. The professors knew the 25 Full Summer Class had all received Staves ages ago when they climbed Fujiyama, and took advantage of the fact that the Class was actually ahead of the course work to begin to teach them about their new magical tool. Sensei learned that they waited until now for a variety of reasons. Basically as Second through Fourth Years, they still lacked the control and focus needed to use the staves to their maximum effect. As the original Harry never had a stave, this was new magic for Sensei.

He could see the utility in certain instances. Warding and Curse Breaking would be enhanced with such a tool. There was something to be said for spell casting without powering the spell with one's own



magic. Under certain circumstances, stamina was a useful thing for a witch or wizard - especially in combat. The problem was that for a staff to work at maximum potential, it must be in contact with either a natural or magically enhanced surface at all times. That would work at distance, where the caster was outside of the range of a wand carrier and could rain a world of hurt down on his opponents without fear of a counter. Unfortunately, the original Harry almost always engaged an adversary at close range, well within wand fire. A staff would fix him to a spot when mobility could be the difference between victory and defeat and life and death. Still, it was a very powerful tool in the wizard arsenal and Sensei was pleased that the kids were learning about them.

The other thing that stunned Sensei was that the kids already had learned the Patronus Charm. All three were fully corporeal, and Harry's and Hermione's were the same as last time: a stag and an otter. Clarice's was a ram. True, while corporeal, the charms were still weak. That was a function of their true magical age and their charms would probably be quite powerful in five to ten real years. The Patronus was taught both in Defense (as it had many uses against dark creatures, magic and as a shield) and in Charms, for that what it was. As a pure charm, it was a secure way to send messages.

Sensei was also surprised that they were all learning to become animagi. This magic, that would allow them to assume an animal form at will yet retain their human intelligence, was not taught in Britain. Sensei knew it was hard to master. But as he watched the lessons which had begun in the Eight Term (half way through their Fourth Year), he began to wonder whether it was just the lack of good instruction that made it hard. Again, this was taught in both Defense and Transfiguration. The Transfiguration professor focused on benign creatures. Everyone had one and it was usually the one they mastered first. Such creatures, such as dogs, cats, birds and common rodents had uses in escape and stealth. It was a great way to get out of a bind - as had Peter Pettigrew - or gather information - as had a particularly annoying reporter named Rita Skeeter. But these forms were vulnerable to predation.

In Defense, the professors assisted in practicing the "Base" form, or their passive Spirit Animal. Defense, however, expanded upon the



meditations and techniques to help the students find and perfect their “Warrior” form or aggressive Spirit Animal. Few ever perfected both forms, even with instruction. The “Warrior” form was always a powerful predator and could be used in a fight. Both forms were being taught wandlessly. No student had yet succeeded in transforming. Given their youth, this was hardly a surprise. What surprised Sensei is they all knew generally what their base form was going to be. He also knew every student was encouraged to continue both processed over the next year. To his surprise, the Professors said that over half of the students would probably succeed in achieving their “Base Form” sometime before the next summer.

Sensei told the kids and Rose that this could be a great advantage. If they achieved either or both forms before they turned eleven, they fell into a loophole in British Magical Law. Their transformations would be considered natural, a form of controlled accidental magic and they would be unregulated. For all others, becoming an animagus after that age was considered “unnatural” and a suspect sign of dark tendencies. Those people were required to register themselves with the Ministry for Magic. Sensei agreed it was a silly law, but added that most laws in the Wizarding World, or at least in Wizarding Britain began with silly and ended with down right insane.

FRIDAY, JULY 29, 1988 - SCHOOL DAY 1490 - WATANABE  
SCHOOL OF MAGICAL STUDIES, KYOTO JAPAN

Rose was sitting in her floor’s library / study room watch the children as they studied for their next exams. They were into their O.W.L.s, the magical equivalent of the O Levels back home (soon to become GCSEs). This Term, non-magical classes ended four weeks early and they had a three day exam period for those end of year exams. 88-4, those few who began as at Seventh Year non-magical, had the worst deal in a way. They did not take O Levels in this system. But they did have to take College Boards. Fortunately, those only lasted about six hours. Still, it was a lot to take in at once. The other years only had to worry about O.W.L.s as a career influencing examination.

She watched as her three favorite charges worked and worked and helped anyone who asked - at least where they were taking the same



exams. They could still act their age. They still did. But here, in this room with their books opened, they had grown so much.

Coming here to be with them this month - as she had to remind herself that that was all the real time that had passed - was the best decision of her life. She had been with them through so much and watched them grow as students. She had learned more about magic and the world for that matter than she probably had her entire life and she had not missed a day of her babies lives. For now, she truly considered all three of them her children and they considered her their Mum.

She had tried not to mother them to death. She had to try, as there were twenty-three other children she had to help as well. Still, she had spent more time with Hermione at this school (and Harry and Clarice as well as the three were almost inseparable) than she had probably in the entire time since Hermione became her daughter. All three had arrived here cocooned in their own shells. All three had been friendless until those days when they met in the hospital. Harry had suffered from the worst forms of abuse imaginable at the hands of his former "care givers" and Clarice had lost the only family she had ever known and had seen both her parents die. The friendship that had formed before they came here had taken some of the edges off. The friendships and experiences they had here had seemed to erase the surface scars of their pasts.

Rose was no fool. She knew Harry would never forget the abuse he suffered. Clarice would never forget losing her folks. None of the three of them would ever forget the loneliness of being without friends. But the gaping wounds had healed. She had been there to watch over the healing and was glad. Had she stayed at home, she would have missed it and been confronted with a different Harry, Hermione and Clarice than the three who had left home.

Her kids were the top of this class. They were very competitive people. But as between the three of them, they were very, very supportive. The handful of kids who might be considered bullies at this school (the real bad ones never lasted a Term) knew better than to pick on any of these three because the other two were there as well. The Long Term Floor learned that fast, and learned that if you



are nice to them, they will be there for you too. They stuck up for each other and all their friends and the school knew it. It seemed every first term as older students arrived and joined their year, there were a few who thought it their right to pick on the Long Terms, who were always younger. That lasted a couple of weeks or less.

The Floor was a tight group. They all helped each other. They all celebrated birthdays and holidays. They all considered each others' achievements a collective one. But they had leaders. Regardless of age, those leaders were Harry, Hermione and Clarice - and Clarice was the youngest on the floor by a noticeable margin. No one cared about that. Rose looked back on the "big bonding moment" as she thought of it. There was the before. Before there had been cliques on the Floor. Harry, Hermione, Clarice, the Donovans and McGonagalls were one. There were three others and a couple of students without one. Then, on Clarice's real Birthday, the Floor climbed Fujiyama together. It was never that way again. They somehow went from a collection of groups, to a collection of friends who were part of one Group.

The School had a Prefect system in place for all students who were not either in non-magical University or had passed their N.E.W.T.s and moved on to Masters Levels (Magical University). On very rare occasions, this honor had fallen to a Full Summer Student. For the most part, Prefects were fourteen years of age or older. There were two classes of Prefect, although no real distinction between them. Non-Magical ones were selected from students who were three years away from University studies. Magical ones were in their fifth year of magical studies. It was an honor to be a prefect. By that point, you were expected to be fluent in Japanese and were expected to enforce the school rules. It was rare for any student on a Full Term Floor to be made prefect as they were always younger than the yearlies - the students who attended two to four terms a summer.

Rose's Floor was a shock. When the Full Summer students finished their third year, two in 88-4 were selected as Non-magical Prefects. At the end of Fourth Year, four made Magical Prefect - a record. One was in 88-3 (Steven McGonagall) and the other three were Harry, Hermione and Clarice. As such, while young, they were very popular because they were more about fixing a problem than handing out



punishments. Rose remembered a recent conversation that was soon Floor legend.

"You have a most interesting and abnormal group of students under your direction," Professor Genda said to Rose Granger and Emily Donovan.

"How so?" Rose asked.

"Let us begin with the fact that we've completed eight Terms this summer. You have the Full Term, First Year Magical English students. You began with twenty-five and you still have all. Every other major language Full Term section has had at least three drop out. Some leave from home sickness, others 'cause they're too young to cut it. You two have lost none.

"Let us add that Prefect Selection means you have six now: two in 88-4 as Non-magical selections and FOUR in 88-2 as magicals! To have two in a Full Term Floor is rare but has happened. But six? Including three under the age of nine with authority over any non-college or Masters level student? Not normal.

"Throw in their overall class performance. Given their actual ages, we've come to expect a certain average at or below overall average performance as the older Term Only students return. Yet the lot of them are top third or higher across the board?

"Whatever you're doing there, keep it up!"

The story was relayed to the entire floor that night in a special meeting. Brian Johnson from Canada yelled out "WE DON'T DO NORMAL!"

Rose beamed with pride as all her charges then voted and made that the floor motto. Harry, Hermione and Clarice were among the youngest, but had blossomed into the leaders of the floor and were respected beyond. Rose never saw that coming, but was so proud of those three and all her charges. She was definitely going to re-apply for next summer! Emily was not, so Rose was now thinking of Remus



or Harry and Clarice's godfather as the magical counterpart for this tight knit group of high performing kids.

Rose watched in awe as the relationship between her three children evolved over time. Clarice was clearly the sister. She was a best friend, but she was now Harry's sister and to a slightly lesser degree Hermione's. The three were a team and a group one could not ignore, but a different dynamic was building between the other two. Thankfully, Rose thought, it did not matter. It had no effect on anyone one of the other's relationship with Clarice or hers with them.

She knew the school called Harry and Hermione "The Boyfriend and Girlfriend." They were always close. They were always holding hands and were not concerned about their occasional kisses on the cheek or forehead. The three were very close, but those two were even closer still. Harry and Hermione were now seen as a part of the place. No one teased them about their open displays of friendship or their close relationship with Clarice. But all knew that this Trio was a couple with their sister as an equal. They were all too young for romantic involvement. But Rose knew one day that bubble would burst. She had come to know all three children - including Hermione - so well. If Harry continued to grow as a person as he had, and if one day his relationship with Hermione really became romantic in nature, she would have no objection. Convincing Robert, however, might be an issue.

SATURDAY, JULY 30, 1988 - HEATHROW INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT, LONDON U.K.

"DADDY!" a voice called from the crowd exiting Customs. Robert Granger looked and saw a young girl with brown hair shooting towards him like a missile. He was soon being hugged by her, even though she was barely taller than his stomach.

"Tinkerbelle?" he asked.

"I've missed you so much, Daddy! Had Mum not been there ... or Harry or Clarice? I don't know. I don't know if I could have done it."

"Missed you too, Princess. Have you grown?"



“Only a little, Daddy. Harry, though. He’s a lot bigger!”

“Look at me?”

Hermione looked up.

“Little taller,” Robert smiled. “Lost a bit of your baby fat and such. You look good, Sweetie.”

“Thanks dad. Mind Body and Magic, that’s what they say, you know.”

“Indeed I do. Where’s you’re Mum?”

“There she is!” Hermione said. “Mum!”

Rose Granger appeared from the crowd with Harry and Clarice in tow for only a moment. As soon as they saw Robert, they too ran over dragging their bags behind them.

“Bloody hell, Harry ...”

“Daddy! Language!” Hermione started.

“Give me a break,” Clarice said. “He hasn’t seen us in a month and we haven’t seen him in ages and ... Sissy, we know you can cuss like a sailor!”

“My daughter?” Robert began.

“One of the youngest Prefects,” Clarice said. “I am the youngest. Older kids don’t respond to the rule book. Good cussing and better hexing works!”

“I prefer just to cuss them out for being stupid enough to be caught,” Harry added as he took hold of Hermione’s hand by what was now instinct.

“You have definitely grown,” Robert said.



“Six inches!” Harry replied proudly.

“Those potions worked miracles,” Rose added as she arrived. She practically fell into Robert’s arms. “God I’ve missed you!” she said pulling herself forward into a deep and long kiss.

“Missed you too,” Robert said.

“Get a room,” Clarice chided.

“What’s that?” Robert asked with an eyebrow raised.

“It’s what we young prefects say to older students snogging in broad daylight!”

Robert could not help but laugh. “And I intend to,” he whispered to his wife.

“You’d better,” she replied. “It may only have been a month for you but...”

“Regrets?”

“Only that you were not there, love,” Rose replied. “I learned so much there. And I can speak Japanese. Good thing that, as they can’t use that as a secret language,” she whispered.

“Should I be worried?”

“Not really.”

Robert nodded. “Right then! Car! Follow me.”

“We moved?” Rose asked.

“Not yet, love. Minnie is still working out the details. After Disney.”

Rose nodded.

The reunited family walked off in search of their car.



SATURDAY, JULY 30, 1988 - 16 WILLOW WAY, LOUGHTON, ESSEX, U.K.

The multi-purpose pulled into the short drive before the house the kids and Rose had left a month ago in real time but had not seen in over 1,500 days for them. Each pulled their bags out of the back and dragged them behind them. Although they had yet to say anything to Robert, each was packed with presents that they had bought for him, Remus, Sirius and Minerva.

They entered the front door and there was a huge banner on the wall in the main living room proclaiming "WELCOME HOME!"

"They're here," a voice called out. The kids were still getting used to being in the room when four adults entered. Minerva led the group followed by Remus, Sirius and Sophie, although Harry and the others had forgotten her name by now.

"You're better?" Harry asked looking at Sirius.

"Well enough to get out of the Hospital, Harry. And my my if you didn't sprout a bit. You all look - erm ..."

"I believe the word is fit," Minerva said.

Rose snorted. "Kind of hard not to get into shape at that school."

Sirius hugged his godchildren and then Hermione. The hugs continued until the only adult who had not hugged them was Sophie.

"Erm, I'm sorry," Harry said to her, "but I forgot your name. I remember you were Sirius's Healer or something."

Sophie smiled at him. "I am pleased you remember that, Harry. I know you four have been away a long time. Thanks. I'm Sophie."

"Pleased to meet you again, Sophie," Harry said.

"Likewise," Hermione and Clarice added.



“So - erm - are you here to keep an eye on Sirius?”

The adults, save Rose, began to chuckle.

“She’s keeping more than just an eye on the Old Dog,” Remus said. Noting the confused look on the children’s faces he added, “they’re dating.”

“They’re not going to get all kissy face, are they?” Clarice asked.

“You kiss Harry all the time,” Rose observed. “As does Hermione.”

“Not on the lips, that’s icky! Besides, he’s my brother.”

“And what is Hermione then,” Sirius asked.

“Shouldn’t have asked her that one,” Rose whispered.

“Well, if you believe all the others at school, she’s his girlfriend.”

Hermione and Harry blushed but did not deny the fact that it was what everyone thought.

“I of course know better,” Clarice continued. “They are not boyfriend and girlfriend - yet!”

Harry rolled his eyes.

“Honestly!” Hermione huffed. The adults laughed at this.

“Well, how’d you do this last Term,” Robert asked. “The last letters we received were from the end of Ninth Term.

“Same as usual,” Hermione said as if it was not big deal. “First, Second and Third in non-magical studies.”

“And magical?” Minerva asked.

“Don’t know yet,” Harry said as he felt Hermione tense up.



"Is something wrong, Child?" Sophie asked.

"No! Nothing!" Hermione shot back in a squeak.

Clarice rolled her eyes. "She's always like that," she said. "She always thinks she blew it on exams and always gets top marks. It's annoying, really."

"It's worse!" Hermione said. "I was so sure we'd get our scores! It must mean we didn't do well!"

"And what makes you think you didn't get your scores?" Rose asked.

Hermione glared at her mother. "What do you mean, Mother?"

"Oh, it's just that I got your scores the day before we left."

"And why didn't you give them to me! You know how worried I get!"

"Because this time, I thought it would be best if you got them now so the whole family would be here."

"To see me fail," Hermione grumbles.

Rose pulled three envelopes from her purse and passed them to the three children. Hermione nervously opened hers, and was afraid to look.

"Wow!" Clarice said first. "Clean sweep for me!" She handed her scores to Harry, who then passed them around the room:

ENGLISH SECTION CLASS: 88-2  
CLARICE LILLIAN JAMESON  
REAL AGE: 7  
ASSIMILATED AGE: 11  
LOUGHTON, ESSEX, UK  
I.C.W. CERTIFIED ORDINARY WIZARING LEVELS

Passing Grades:



O - Outstanding.  
E - Exceeds Expectations  
A - Acceptable.\*

\*Will need remedial study or professor permission for NEWT level.

Failing Grades:

P - Poor. May retake exams.  
D - Dreadful. Must retake required classes.  
T - Troll. Dropped from school.

HONORS:

H - Honors: Top score on ICW in this examination year.  
WD - With Distinction: Top 1% of all international exams.

COURSE THEORY PRACTICAL OVERALL

ARITHMANCY: O N O  
ASTRONOMY: O O O  
ANCIENT RUNES: O N O  
CHARMS: O+ O+ O+WD  
DEFENSE: O O O  
HERBOLOGY: O O O  
MIND MAGICS: O O O  
POTIONS: O O+ O  
RITUAL MAGICS: O+ O+ O+WD  
TRANSFIGURATION: O+ O O

CLASS RANK: 3/437

"These are excellent marks, Clarice," McGonagall said. "I am proud of you."

"Thanks," Clarice said blushing. "We all worked really hard."

"I knew that before I left," McGonagall smiled. "I wish even a small fraction of my students worked as hard as the three of you."



"H-Harry?" Hermione asked still afraid to look at her marks.

Harry looked at his marks and smiled. He passed them to Hermione who then passed them around the room.

ENGLISH SECTION CLASS: 88-2  
HARRY JAMES POTTER  
REAL AGE: 7  
ASSIMILATED AGE: 12  
LOUGHTON, ESSEX, UK  
I.C.W. CERTIFIED ORDINARY WIZARING LEVELS

COURSE THEORY PRACTICAL OVERALL

ARITHMANCY: O N O  
ASTRONOMY O O O  
ANCIENT RUNES: O N O  
CHARMS: O O+ O  
DEFENSE: O+ O+ O+/WD  
HERBOLOGY: O O O  
MIND MAGICS: O O+ O  
POTIONS: O+ O+ O+/H  
RITUAL MAGICS: O O O  
TRANSFIGURATION: O O+ O

CLASS RANK: 2/437

"Honors in Potions?" Sirius asked.

"I like cooking," Harry shrugged. "The two are similar."

"And what does Honors really mean?"

"It means your godson got the highest marks in the world this year," Minerva said.

Sirius chuckled. "Way to go! Your Mum was pretty good at Potions too, you know."



“She was?” Harry asked.

“Best in our year,” Remus replied. “Drove Snivellus spare, she did.”

“Who?”

“He was second best. He hated losing to a Gryffindor,” Sirius said.

“And now he’s Potions Professor at Hogwarts,” Minerva added.

“Has Dumbledore gone mental?” Sirius said. “Why would he make that low life, Death Eater, greasy git a Professor?”

Minerva shrugged. “He insists he knows what he’s doing.”

“Who? The Headmaster or Slime Ball?”

“The Headmaster.”

“Hmph,” Sirius said. “Remind me never to talk to that sanctimonious ass again. Gone round the twist long ago if you ask me.”

“These are wonderful,” Remus added trying to get back on point.

“Go on, Hermione,” Rose said. “Have a look.

Cautiously, she pulled her marks from the envelope and opened the folded page. She kept her eyes closed for several seconds before slowly opening them to read what she knew was the end of her magical education. She was so certain she made mistakes, just as she always was. As she read, a smile began to appear on her face. By the time she finished, it was huge.

“Well,” Harry asked. Hermione handed him her marks.

ENGLISH SECTION CLASS: 88-2  
HERMIONE JANE GRANGER  
REAL AGE: 8  
ASSIMILATED AGE: 12  
LOUGHTON, ESSEX, UK



## I.C.W. CERTIFIED ORDINARY WIZARING LEVELS

### COURSE THEORY PRACTICAL OVERALL

ARITHMANCY: O+ N O+/WD  
ASTRONOMY O O O  
ANCIENT RUNES: O+ N O+/WD  
CHARMS: O+ O O  
DEFENSE: O O+ O  
HERBOLOGY: O O O  
MIND MAGICS: O O+ O  
POTIONS: O+ O O  
RITUAL MAGICS: O O O  
TRANSFIGURATION: O+ O+ O+/H

CLASS RANK: 1/437

"Figures," Harry said without emotion but a smirk on his face as he passed the marks to Clarice.

"What?" the adults asked.

"Honors in Transfiguration and top of the Class again," Harry beamed. "I swear I don't understand how you always get so worked up when you always come out on top, Hermione."

"Neither do I," Hermione admitted.



## CHAPTER TWENTY-NINE: ALL SUMMERS END

SUNDAY, JULY 31, 1988 - 16 WILLOW WAY, LOUGHTON, ESSEX, U.K.

Rose walked into the kitchen not long after sunrise. She was still adjusting to the time difference. To her surprise, she found Minnie crying with a lot of crumpled up tissue on the table.

"Minnie?"

"I'm find child," Minerva said.

"You've been bawling your eyes out, Minnie. Why?"

"It's just... It's just the present the kids brought me."

Rose nodded. Last night the kids had talked their ears off about school and Japan and just before going to bed, they ran up stairs and came down with gifts. They gave Robert, Remus and Sirius five presents each and Minerva four. The gifts were all bought in Japan and represented each of their five academic years. Needless to say with the exception of Rose, none of them were expecting that and each was misty eyed. Minerva opened all but one of hers, deciding to leave it for the morning. The last was a large envelope. Rose guessed this was the present.

"What did they give you?" Rose asked. She had never seen Minerva so emotional and she had known her for years.

"M-my family."

"What?"

Minerva sniffled. "These are letters they got from my Nephew Richard, my grandnephew and grandniece Roger and Emily and my Great Grands: Stephen and Erin McGonagall and Stacey and Lyle Donovan."



Rose gasped! "They were on our floor! Emily was too! She was the magical minder."

"That was her?" Minerva said. "All that time and I was friends with my Grandniece?"

"So it would seem," Rose said.

"You didn't know?" Minerva asked.

Rose shook her head. "No one told me," she added softly.

"We wanted it to be a surprise," a voice said. The two women looked up and saw Harry and Hermione entering the kitchen.

"It's really early," Rose said.

"Couldn't sleep anymore, Mum," Hermione replied.

"And Clarice?"

Hermione snorted. "She could sleep all day if you let her."

"Why didn't you say something?" Rose asked.

"Didn't know for sure until the last mail arrived," Hermione said. "I remember Minnie telling us about her family and how her younger brother fled the country during the War and stuff, and how he took his kids and grandkids with him. Anyway, about mid way through it kind of came up and the McGonagall and Donovan stories seemed very similar. And since Mrs. Donovan was the McGonagall's Aunt and her brother was their father..."

"Anyway, they wrote back home to their Gramps and he said his dad and brother and sister fled England in the early seventies. His Dad was named Ben and he had an older sister named Minerva and it all fit. So we got them all to write you letters and send pictures and we only got them all the last day before outgoing mail stopped. So, we decided to make it a surprise gift. Sorry. We didn't want you to cry."



Minerva got up and walked over pulling the two into a hug. "You gave me the best present of my life, you know. Clarice too. You gave me my family back."

"Everyone deserves a family," Harry said.

"And your welcome," Hermione added.

---

Harry, Hermione and Clarice had left for Japan on Wednesday, June 28, 1988 and arrived on Thursday, June 29th due to the time zone changes. At eight that evening, time compression began and they marked their "fake" calendars accordingly. Their first real day, when they went shopping, was Friday, June 30th. By their fake calendar, however, it was August 18, 1988. Clarice's real birthday was on Thursday, July 12th, 1988, but by their "fake" calendar, it was May 23rd, 1990. Their last day was Friday, July 19th 1988. However, on their "fake" calendars, it was September 2nd, 1992. Their school records contained both their real ages and their assimilated ages. Clarice was now seven, but she had five "fake" birthday's while at school and her assimilated age was eleven. Harry left the school at age seven and twelve respectively. Hermione left at age eight and twelve as she was seventeen days shy of her fifth assimilated birthday. She would return next summer at the assimilated age of thirteen.

This calendar confusion explained why Harry was surprised when he was told that today was his birthday. He had honestly forgotten that it was still 1988. Well, that was not entirely true. He knew what the real year was. He just forgot it was his birthday again. They had discussed this the night before and Harry agreed that today could be a combined celebration. In addition to him really turning eight years old, they would also have a cake for Clarice's belated seventh birthday and a third for all three welcoming them home. Harry and Clarice would get birthday presents from the adults and all three would get presents for their homecoming.



They were further surprised to learn that it would not just be their adults. The Evans and Greengrass families would be coming over as well. The Weasleys, whom the kids had forgotton, were not coming mainly because there was no magical way to get here or non-magical way to invite them. That would be remedied in the future, but for today it would be a smaller party.

Sirius was the first to arrive along with Sophie. They both entered carrying several large wrapped gifts that naturally piqued the children's curiosity, especially since the three largest boxes looked identical and were for all three of them. Remus and Minerva arrived within minutes of each other also with a stack of gifts. Hermione was reminded that she had a birthday coming up. She knew this, but was still a little disappointed it was not today.

"Don't worry, Hermione," Harry told her. "I got you something really special."

"You did?" she asked excitedly. "What? What is it?"

"Not telling. Besides, we have a month and a half to go and I might want to get you another present or two."

"You might?"

"Actually, I probably will ... if you're nice to me."

"I'm always nice to you, Harry. Well almost always."

"So no worries then."

"Thanks Harry," she said kissing him on the cheek.

"And I already got you a nice real birthday pressie too, Sissy," Clarice added. "And nope, I'm not telling either and ..." she said looking at Harry who nodded, "we both got you pressies for your assimilated thirteenth birthday."

"But I didn't have one," Hermione protested.



“Harry and I think you should and it will be in about two weeks.”

“We’ll be in Florida.”

“So? You’re my big sister.”

Hermione thought for a moment and smiled. “Thanks guys.”

The Evans arrived next. Mike and his wife Marie each brought two gifts as did the three youngest Evans children: Aaron, Cynthia and Billy. The three older children did not have any gifts. Jason was sixteen and had just taken his O.W.L.s, a fact that would actually give him something to talk about to his surprise. Amber was fourteen and about to start her Fourth Year at St. Georges. Then there was Michelle who had finished her first year. Billy and Cynthia also brought a couple of friends they knew. They were about the same age as the birthday boy. One was Ernie McMillan and the other was Lisa Turpin. They had met the two magical children years ago in Diagon Alley and had been friends since then.

The Greengrasses were the last to arrive. David, his wife Sarah and their two oldest daughters Daphne and Astoria had two presents each and to Harry’s surprise little Renee and Jessie had presents too. They also had a friend in two. Her name was Millicent Bulstrode. She was a little on the large side, Harry and the others thought, and quiet. But she seemed open minded and very observant. Harry noted the gifts from the youngest Greengrass girls.

“They both wanted to give Harry something,” Daphne explained. “But they were told to give Clarice something as well ‘cause that’s polite.”

“Why? Why did they want to give Harry something?”

Daphne shrugged. “They think he’s way cool. Don’t see it myself. I mean he is nice, for a boy. But cool?”

Hermione actually laughed a bit. She might think Harry is cool and he happened to be her best friend in the world, but she also knew most girls her age didn’t like boys at all. Harry was not typical, in Hermione’s opinion. The fact that Renee and Jessie thought he was



fun said something. But Hermione knew that the others barely knew him.

This was the first chance the adults had to meet David's wife Sarah. She had not been feeling well on the "play date" at their home a little over a month before and it was obvious why.

"David didn't tell me you were expecting," Rose said when they were introduced."

Sarah shrugged. "Typical man," she sighed. "It probably never came up."

"So when are you due?"

"Around the end of October."

"Congratulations."

"Thanks."

"Know what it is yet?"

Sarah sighed. "Another girl. Oh, don't get me wrong, we're happy. No idea really what a boy would be like with four older sisters. Still, David likes to say he's been cursed."

"Has he?"

"No. Not that we know of, but it is a way to get the Purebloods we do know off our case."

"What do you mean?"

"No heir. No son to keep the family name going. For many Purebloods that's a big deal."

"And you?"



"We are not a major family," Sarah said. "The Greengrasses came here from the continent last century so we lack the status of some of the older families. Those families, however ... it's pathetic really."

"How so?"

"David and I have five children 'casue we love children and love being parents. We also love each other. Unlike many old families, we married for love and not family. Most of the traditional Purebloods have arranged marriages and once they produce and heir, that's it. No more little ones. And as there are some darker magics that practically guarantee a son, most of those families have only one or two children, usually only one."

"Sounds like the old aristocracy."

"A fair analogy," Sarah said. "David and I may be Purebloods, but our attitudes and lifestyle is more Muggle than magical. I love all my girls as does David. Some Purebloods see daughters as a burden."

"Sounds pathetic," Rose huffed.

Sarah merely sighed in agreement.

One of the questions that was raised before the guests started arising was what the kids could tell the others about their summer. As the Watanabe School was not secret, it was decided the kids could tell their friends whatever they wanted.

"You went to school over your summer hols?" Cynthia Evans asked in shock.

"Yep," Hermione said. "It was cool."

"You're weird," Daphne said. "Why go to school over the summer?"

"So we don't have to during the year," Harry said.

"There's no way you can learn a year full of stuff in a month," Michelle Evans said.



“Not without magic,” Ernie McMillan added.

The three kids smiled.

“It was a magical school?”

“Yep.” Clarice said. “And it used something called Time Compression. Every day we were there we had fifty days of learning and stuff.”

“Fifty?” Daphne asked. “How many days did you have?”

“One thousand five hundred,” Harry said. “Four years and forty days. We actually took five years worth of courses, both magical and non magical.”

‘Bloody hell,” Ernie said. “You had five years of magical studies? Without a wand?”

“We learned without a wand,” Clarice said. “And with one.”

“Y-you have wands?”

The three children nodded. “Want to see them?” Hermione asked.

“Yeah!”

The three ran to their rooms to get their wands.

“Hey Jason!,” Aaron said. “Get over here! You need to see this.”

The kids came down and showed the others their wands.

“Wicked!” Aaron said. “It’s real?”

They nodded.

“But you can’t,” Amber Evans said. “You can’t have a wand until you’re eleven. It’s illegal.”



"We can't purchase a wand in Britain until we are eleven," Hermione corrected. "And we didn't. We got these in Japan where kids can get a wand at age six - just like most of the rest of the world."

"You're kidding," Daphne said.

"Nope, it's true," Clarice replied. "Some countries in Europe it's eight. Most it's six and most everywhere else it's six as well. You start learning magic the same time you start school. Here, no magic before age eleven. Don't know why really. It seems silly to me 'cause I'm seven and still passed my O.W.L.s with all outstandings."

"You're joking," Jason Evans said.

"Nope. Third in my class," Clarice said. "The three of us all took: Arithmancy, Astronomy, Runes, Charms, Defense, Herbology, Mind Magics, Potions, Ritual Magics and Transfiguration. I got O's in everything and With Distinctions in Charms and Rituals."

The kids looked at Harry.

"O's in everything, With Distinction in Defense and Honors in Potions."

"Bloody hell!" Jason said.

"What," Astoria asked.

"Honors means we was the best in the world this year."

"Wow!"

"I was still only second in my class," Harry added. "Hermione was first."

"Whoa!" several voices said.

"With Distinctions in Arithmancy and Runes, Honors in Transfiguration," Hermione added proudly.



“And she finished third in both the magical dueling tournament and the martial arts one.”

“The only reason Hermione and I did not make the finals,” Clarice began, “is ‘cause we got paired up with you. Harry knocked me out in the quarters and Hermione in the Semi’s.”

“Out of over twenty bouts leading to the finals,” Harry said, “you two were the hardest.”

“Thanks Harry,” Clarice said.

“It’s true. My bouts with these two were the two longest of the tourney. You should have heard it!”

“The crowd was really into it,” Clarice said. “Our friends said the finals were a real let down.”

Harry shrugged. “He wasn’t that hard. Either of you could have taken him too. He went through nothing and I had to get through two of the best duelists in our year just to make the finals.”

“Show me,” Jason said. He still could not believe any of it.

Hermione asked her parents if they could put on a demonstration in the back yard. After learning that the wards would both prevent any Muggles from seeing magic and allowing any magic to escape the property they agreed. While Rose had been there and seen the tournament, none of the others had and were naturally curious. They set up chairs on the patio for all the adults and kids with three chairs reserved for the combatants as Harry, Hermione and Clarice changed.

The audience was in their seats when the three kids came out all dressed in black. The black foreign looking robes were explained as they had all attained a mastery in the martial arts in Karate and Magical Dueling. They were all low level masteries, but they rated the black. Hermione and Clarice paired off first, as Harry was the “reigning champion.” Sirius was asked to be the judge. First to score a hit would win. They were dueling under international rules, which stunned Sirius as in theory there were few limitations on what spells



could be used. Basically, the Unforgivable Curses were out and other than that anything goes.

The duel was unlike anything the adults who were magical had ever seen. Harry explained the tactics. Both combatants were using shifting to move about the yard, although that would diminish as the fight progressed as it required a calm mind to work at all. They were also using their martial arts skills to dodge and reposition for an attack. Unlike formal duels, they moved constantly and quickly. They did not stand their ground and trade spells. The pace was fast and furious from the beginning. They blocked and attacked simultaneously, constantly using both wand and wandless magic. The two girls were almost a blur of constant motion each trying to get past the other's defense or surprise them. Many of the spells would require immediate medical attention if they scored a clean hit and that had the older witches and wizards worried. Rose knew that a third of the participants in the tournament ended up in hospital and was grateful that Sophie was here. She would never have approved without a Healer present. True, Sophie was not fully qualified, but the woman had to know magical trauma and first aid. About ten minutes in and neither combatant could Shift. The pace of spell casting increased. At twenty-two minutes, Clarice got lucky with a minor stinging hex and scored her hit.

"Should have zigged rather than zagged," a sweat soaked and panting Hermione said as she sat down. "Nice shot, Sis," she said.

Clarice was still catching her breath and could only nod.

Harry made relatively short work of his sister after a ten minute break. It took him fourteen minutes to take her down with a stunner. Clarice was exhausted but was actually pleased she had done so well.

"I nearly had you more than a few times, Bro," she said with a smile.

"She's a sneaky one," Harry said.

The final match was Harry and Hermione. Hermione had time to recover and was shifting all over the place. Harry was the first to lose this ability, but was able to compensate with agility and speed. After



twenty-two minutes, Hermione managed to disarm him and win the match. Harry was clearly exhausted.

“Good match,” he said.

“Not a fair one,” Hermione added. “I was more rested than you.”

“Such is life,” Harry smiled as Hermione kissed his cheek.

The kids were more than a little impressed. The adults were stunned. At least a few of them were measuring power levels once the shock wore off and none of the three were hugely out of the norm. True, all three were easily in the top five percent, if not higher, for their age. But an eight year old was nowhere near their full potential. It was the skills that impressed the adults. These kids were far more skilled than most after five years of magical school. Rose explained - having been there - that it was part and parcel of the Watanabe system. They teach knowledge and skill. Power will come when it comes. But power without knowledge and skill is useless. Mind, Body and Magic. That was the school's motto and what they stressed from Day One. Rose knew that when they went home, most of the kids might begin pestering their parents about attending that school so far away. She knew it was expensive, but part of her also wondered whether it would be possible to send those children as well. She decided she would need to look into the Potter Estate to see if it could fund the tuition for Harry and the others friends or whether scholarships were available. Rose had already decided to return next summer. She had been the school dentist and her abilities seemed to be hard to come by. Besides, she loved being there for the kids.

The proof, as they say, was in the pudding. Jason Evans was one of the best duelists in his year. He was ultimately ptted against Clarice, the youngest of the Watanabe students and the least exhausted. He used his mother's wand which he had used before and was out cold from a weak stunner within two minutes. These kids were not flukes. They were well trained in the skills of defense. Any doubts the others had were gone. In fact, Mike and David were impressed with the kids tactics and actually asked whether they might be willing to share with the magicals in MI-5, Office W.



“Can you teach us magic?” Renee Greengrass asked.

There was at first a hasty discussion in Japanese between the three students and Rose Granger. Finally, there was a discussion in English between the adults.

Rose eventually talked to Harry, Hermione and Clarice.

“Can you?” she asked.

“Wandless maybe,” Hermione said.

“Can you try?”

“I will,” Harry said. “Right then,” Harry continued, “Kneel down and focus! Breathe in through your nose and out through your mouth and focus inwards. Find your magic! You will know when you have. When you have please raise a hand.”

The other children did as was asked.

Soon a hand raised. It was little Jessie Greengrass who was almost three years old.

“You find your magic?” Harry asked sitting beside her.

“Light,” she said. “It says things.”

“Like what?”

“Do things.”

“You want to do them?”

“No. Yes. Donno.”

“It may be your magic. Tell it you want it to do what you want it to, Okay?”

“Kay.”



“And?”

“It will.”

“Keep focusing for now, Jessie. You’re doing well. Wait for the others.”

“Kay.”

They all soon found their inner magic and with Harry’s instruction were able to control it. Hermione had conjured feathers for them all to play with and they did. Soon all the children were making them fly about.

Jessie was the youngest and the first to succeed.

“She has no fear or preconceived ideas about magic,” Harry said. “To her it is as natural as breathing. Everyone else has developed some ideas - wrong ideas. This is why teaching magic early is good. They do not hinder their abilities based upon what adults know and were taught.”

“Can we learn this, Mum?” Astoria asked as her feather flew around at her will. “Can we?”

All the parents looked at Rose.

“Hermione was the best at teaching theory,” she said. “The three of them led a study group that blew the school average away. Harry was best at teaching applied magic. Clarice was good period. They pulled their entire floor into the top percentiles and inspired them all. Those three can teach. That’s all there is to it.”

“Saturdays?” David asked.

“We’ll talk about it, David,” Rose responded. “I think they would love to do it.”

“We’ve got a holiday to deal with.” Robert said..



“And time to think about all of this,” Rose added.

The rest of the party was pretty normal. Harry, Hermione and Clarice had showered and changed and they came down again for cake and presents. Without a doubt, Sirius’s welcome home presents were the best. He had bought them Comet 260’s. They were decent training brooms and Sirius promised to teach them to fly once the three got back from holiday. All three thought it was the gift of the day, although Hermione was a little concerned about the concept.

FRIDAY, AUGUST 5, 1988, 261A BAYWATER ROAD, LONDON, U.K.

Potter House in London was a miracle of magic. It was sandwiched in between two huge mansions homes on the north side of Hyde Park and could easily be dismissed as a servant’s entrance. In reality, the simple looking door led into a huge mansion in its own right. There was a library for the Granger women to die for. It had thirty-two bedrooms with a ballroom, banquet hall and numerous other public rooms. It had magic rooms as well to include a fully equipped potions lab and magical gym designed for combat training. The “back yard” was a magically expanded space that was over an acre in size. At the back was a carriage house that had a seven car garage. All of it existed on a tiny portion of real land no wider than a door. Magic truly could be a wonderful thing.

Following the party for Harry and the others, the Grangers and all had moved here. It was one of the Potter properties and was less than a mile from the Granger Surgery. The wards were second to none. And, with Hyde Park just across the road, it seemed the perfect place for the Grangers to live with Harry and all. The magicals could access it by Floo and the Grangers could find it without magic. Under its existing wards, it would hide magic from detection. It was a perfect place for the children, the Grangers thought. It was Harry’s home as well. With that, they moved. Sirius and Remus moved in as well. It was a perfect situation as the Evans and Greengrasses now had access to the place by Floo. Between their magical home and back yard and Hyde Park, the kids thought it was brilliant.



SUNDAY, AUGUST 20, 1988, 261A BAYWATER ROAD, POTTER HOUSE, LONDON, U.K.

To the kids surprise, Sirius, Remus and Sophie had joined them on their family holiday to Orlando, Florida. It could have been a real drag with more “adults” than children, but it was a blast in the end. They all had a wonderful time.

The “Magic Kingdom” of Disney World was clearly not really magical in the sense that there was any magic to it. It was magical in its own way, however. The imagination necessary to come up with its themes and rides blew the magicals away. Each person had their own favorite ride at the park. Harry and Sirius totally loved Space Mountain. Hermione totally hated it. Hermione and Clarice loved “It’s A Small World After All,” Harry thought that one was just okay. Pirates of the Caribbean was a huge hit, as was the Haunted House. But there was no real magic at all in this Magic Kingdom.

It did not really matter. They were having the time of their lives.

Then they went to EPCOT. From a kid’s point of view it was BORING. The sea exhibit, the aquarium totally was awesome, but the rest of the rides were lame.

That is until they visited the World Showcase exhibits. Their rides were lame as well, but here the real magic existed. Each of the world exhibits had its own magical section, one which Muggles could never find. In addition to totally cool rides, there were shopping sections based upon the country’s main or most famous. In the Britain Section there was an imitation of Diagon Alley. In Japan, it was Nishiki that they knew from Kyoto. There was also Mexico, China, France, Germany, Norway, Canada, Italy. Morocco and the United States. All sold wands and under U.S. law, the children were old enough to buy one. Harry found his second wand in Mexico in Humberto’s. Hermione’s second wand was from Olaf’s of Norway. Clarice’s second wand was from Louis of Canada. And they were not the only ones. Remus bought his second wand from Mustafas of Morocco. Sirius had lost his original wand when he was arrested and bought two. His first was a wand from Smith & Sons of Boston. His second



was a Takahashi from Japan, the same wandsmith who had made Harry, Hermione and Clarice's first wands.

They had returned to Britain and to their new home Potter House. They all agreed it was a perfect holiday and Robert and Rose had taken more pictures of this holiday than any other. To them and the kids, it had been perfect. One day they would notice that there were no pictures of Harry and Hermione apart. Clarice mostly not, but she was not in every picture. Harry and Hermione were always together.

Sensei finally appeared this day after Sophie had left. It was the first time he had appeared when Sirius was around. Remus and the Grangers were there when the old, bald version of Harry materialized from nothing.

"What the bloody hell?" Sirius exclaimed.

"It's just Sensei," Harry said. "He can be annoying, but he is harmless."

"And what the hell is he?" Sirius exclaimed.

Sensei then explained who and what he was.

"So," Sirius said, "you're Harry from a different timeline. Yet you're not as well."

"A fair assessment," Sensei said. "My timeline died in many ways when I first met me - or rather Harry."

"How come you never showed up before with Sirius?" Harry asked.

"Don't know," Sensei said. "There's a lot about me which makes no sense really. I am a prototype. My creator - a future Harry, made something unique. I really do not understand some things. I don't understand why some people can see me with ease and others drive me away."

"Example?" Harry asked.



"I generally chose not to appear in St. Mungos. As magical energy, I might have been detected. When you lot were in Japan, did you not notice I never appeared unless you were alone?"

"Now that you mention it..." Hermione began.

"You would appear when Aunt Minnie or Rose was with us," Clarice observed.

"Indeed," Sensei replied. "I was programmed - for lack of a better word - to appear to Harry and those who are trustworthy. The more I've thought about it, the more I see it is a combination of trust. If Harry here trusts you, I might be able to appear. If I don't, I cannot. I was close with the Grangers in my timeline, even after Hermione ruined their memories. Clarice is my sister, so she's got that going for her. Minerva - I always trusted her and she never betrayed that trust. Neither did you, Sirius or Remus for that matter.

"I think it is a combination of both: who Harry here trusts and who never betrayed that trust in my timeline." A long discussion followed as Sirius was brought up to speed about all that had led him finally back to his godson.

"So you're here to change the future?" Sirius asked.

"Ah yes," Sensei replied. "That is a valid question. Change the future? It is not truly set such that there really is a change. I merely know of a future - my future - that I have been sent back to avoid."

"And what makes you not a manipulative bastard?" Sirius asked."

"Aside from the fact I neither participated in nor condoned your incarceration? Don't know. You were imprisoned without trial. At that time, had you borne the mark and lacked the connections, you would have rotted and died in Azkaban. You are not marked. You should have had a trial. That was the law then, and yet..."

"And yet..."



"Dumbledore let you rot," Sensei said. "Not even left you with an interrogation."

"I would have..." Sirius began.

"Been found innocent," Sensei finished. "It was that easy. But Dumbledore would have lost his pawn to his godfather, namely he would have lost control over me. He wants a martyr for the Cause. He wants Harry to die."

Sensei then explained his reasoning.

"But that's..." Sirius began.

"Silly? Ridiculous? Yeah. But he believed it was true. To kill Voldemort, he believed Harry must die. A folly now as our Japanese friends both proved Harry is not and never was a Horcrux and removed his demon soul fragment."

"And what do you expect from Harry?"

"In the end to choose his own path," Sensei said. "Not one chosen for him by others. But for now, we have a unique chance to change things and I should hope with these minor changes we can move forward so that Harry has a life."

"What things?" Sirius asked.

"One of Voldemort's horcruxes is currently at 12 Glimmauld Place. We secure it until Harry and all can figure out how to destroy it. That's a quick one. Second, there are two children he should befriend this year: Neville Longbottom and Luna Lovegood, Luna being the more critical at this time."

"Why" Sirius asked.

"Bottom line they have the potential to be allies. More immediate? They are good people in need of friends, something Harry can relate to."



“And the last?”

“And the hardest,” Sensei said. “They have spare time. I would like Harry and the others to prove who are the Founder’s magical heirs.”

“You know who they are?”

Sensei nodded. “But my knowing is not proof.”

“And I take it Harry is one?”

Sensei nodded.

“Can’t say why, but I will help.”

“Thanks.”



## CHAPTER THIRTY: HOME SWEET HOME?

FRIDAY, AUGUST 25, 1988 - 12 GRIMMAULD PLACE, LONDON, U.K.

It was a three block walk from the nearest Underground station to Sirius's family home. He had taken the children for the day while both of the Granger's were at work. Remus was with them. Sensei had told them the exact location of one of the Horcruxes and Sirius was not about to let this opportunity pass them by. True, it helped that Harry was rather insistent on getting this thing into a place of safe keeping. There was a small vault in the basement of Potter House that seemed an ideal place to store it for now and until they learned how to destroy it.

Sirius was dreading this trip nonetheless. He had not been home since the Christmas Holidays his fifth year. That was twelve years ago. He knew this trip was going to bring back bad memories of his past and really would have preferred not going at all. But he knew the house was filled with dangerous objects and these kids, while bright, were still kids. There was also the problem with his mother. His dad had died in 1979 not long after learning of the death of his younger brother. The circumstances surrounding the death of Orion Black, the last Heir apparent to Head of the Ancient and Noble House of Black, was always suspicious. The gossip was he went off and declared a blood feud on Lord Voldemort and was done in by his own cousin.

Walburga Black was his mother and there was no reason to believe she was not still alive. True, it was said she had sunk into a form of madness following the deaths of her husband and beloved son, Regulus, but she would be sixty-three and that was barely middle age by wizarding standards. Sirius had hoped he would never have to deal with her again. She was one nasty piece of work even before she went mental. Still, it could not be avoided. They needed to secure this horcrux and he did own the house and everything in it. She could rant all she wanted to and there was nothing she could do about it. A part of Sirius hoped she would. Nothing would give him greater satisfaction than casting her out of the family and as she was a Black - she and her husband were second cousins - Merlin that's sick,



Sirius thought - if he disowned her, she would be left with no family whatsoever.

Sirius could sense that the kids were nervous. Even when he was a kid, Grimmauld Place had not been a nice neighborhood and it certainly looked as if it had gotten worse over the years. They were soon standing in front of his "family" home. Sirius frowned.

"Open in the name of the Heir Apparent," he said in a firm voice. They all could hear the sound of deadbolts moving and Sirius took hold of the doorknob and turned it. He was worried that maybe it would not work and they might have to break in. Fortunately, the knob turned and the door opened. The inside was dark. The only light coming from the now opened front door. Interesting, Sirius thought.

"Heir apparent?" Harry asked.

"My Grandfather is Lord Black, Head of the Ancient and Noble House of Black. I am the oldest son of his only son. As my Father is dead, that means I'm the Heir Apparent. This house is the traditional home of the Heir Apparent. Black Manor is the home of the Lord. Granddad's a decent enough man, even if he's a bit of a Pureblood nutter. Never supported the enemy either in word or deed. My Father, though, was a right nasty git."

"I thought he disowned you," Remus said.

"Father did," Sirius replied. "Grandfather did not. Had father become Lord Black, it would have been a done deal. But, as he never did and Grand still lives, I am now Heir Apparent."

"What about your Mum?" Hermione asked.

"Even though my Granddad is fairly decent, he does maintain certain Pureblood traditions. My mother is allowed to live here, but she inherits nothing."

"That doesn't seem right."



"You will find much of magical Britain is hundreds of years behind what you're used to."

"Think she's home?" Remus asked.

"Given the state of things, fair bet she's dead," Sirius said without emotion. "The dust on the floor would have driven her spare. Come on." Sirius waived his wand and several gas lighting fixtures flickered on giving them at least some illumination. A narrow stair led up to their left and a narrow corridor ran down to the right. It was obvious all the rooms were off this corridor.

Sirius turned to the children and kneeled down so he could look them in the eye. "Now what did I tell you?" he asked.

"Not to touch anything," Harry said.

"Why?"

"Cause this was the home of Dark Wizards and there's dangerous stuff here."

"Very good. Sensei said the thing is on a book shelf either in the Drawing Room or the Library. That's up stairs so follow me." Sirius said as he stood and began climbing.

"What's that?" Clarice asked with a shocked tone. She was pointing to several heads of strange beings with bat like ears that were on the wall of the stair.

"Former House Elves," Sirius said in disgust. "I had an ancestor he felt this was the appropriate way to dispose of them when they got too old."

"That's so mean! Why would anyone do that?"

"Yeah. Can't see doing that to Darla or Toby," Harry said. Those were the names of the two House Elves who maintained Potter House.



“Not all witches and wizards are nice people,” Sirius shrugged. “My family for the most part was right nasty. There are notable exceptions, not the least of which you two.”

“You’re our godfather,” Harry said. “Does that make you family too?”

“Actually, I’m your second cousin once removed on my mother’s side and third cousin once removed on my father’s side. My mother and father were second cousins.”

“Eeeew!” Clarice said.

“My parents and their parents believed in blood purity. Pity they practiced it. But it’s hard to remain a Pureblood without the occasional cousins getting married. Fact is, most Purebloods are at least distant cousins. Come along. Drawing room first.”

They followed him into a small drawing room. One whole wall was covered with a tapestry that seemed to show a tree but on closer inspection it was covered with names.

“What’s that?”

Sirius sighed. “For better or worse, that is my family. This,” he said, “is Phineas Nigellus Black, from who all blessings flow,” Sirius added with sarcasm. He’s my Great-great grandfather and the least popular Headmaster in Hogwarts history. Even Slytherins hated him.”

“What are the burn marks?” Clarice asked.

“Ah. Those are my ancestors and relatives who Mother thought were an embarrassment to the family because of their Muggle loving tendencies. This one here?” he pointed to what would have been one of Phineus Black’s siblings, “her name was Isle. She married a Muggle and Mother zapped her. Great-Granduncle Phineas got zapped for being a huge supporter of Muggle and Muggle Born rights. Granduncle Marius was zapped because he was a Squib as in born without magic. Cousin Cedrella was zapped for marrying Septimius Weasley. The Weasleys have always supported Muggle rights. Mother zapped me when I failed to come home after Fifth Year.”



“Why?” Harry asked.

“I could not stand my parents, Harry. You’re father’s family offered to take me in, so I never came back. Not until today. Mother considered me a humiliation because I refused to be the nice Pureblood prince, marry the woman they picked for me and become a nice Death Eater and kill people they considered beneath contempt, such as Muggles. I always hated their view of the world and goodness knows how many hidings I received for telling them so. Mother was the worst of the two. I know my Father had a heart somewhere. He died not long after my younger brother Regulus was killed. Mum was proud of him. Bragged about how her ‘only’ son had died in the Great Cause to rid the world of impurity. Bint!”

“Language!” Hermione said.

“Sorry.”

“So we’re cousins?” Harry asked.

Sirius nodded. He pointed to another name. “This was my Grandaunt Dorea Black. She was Mother’s Aunt. She married your Great-grandfather Charlus Potter so she’s your great-grandmother. Or rather she was. They were killed by Death Eaters in ‘77. Pity. I actually liked her. Surprised mother didn’t zap her as well. Then again, Dorea knew how to keep a low profile and did an amazing job of steering clear of the nastier Blacks. She was always proud of me, I remember,” Sirius sighed.

“So do Purebloods always marry Purebloods?” Hermione asked.

“No. Some families do. The Potters have married for love for ages. Just so happens a fair few were purebloods. Then again, considering they met their wives in Hogwarts, I guess that’s not too surprising. About a third of the students are Purebloods.”

“Why does this matter?”



"It shouldn't Hermione. Yet to some narrow minded fools it does. Magic is magic. Goodness knows how many witches were forced to marry into poverty or worse because their husband was a pureblood. It's silly, if you ask me."

"And what about you, Sirius?" Clarice asked.

"Sophie is a Muggle Born and I don't care. I like her a lot and if we get that serious, well her family history does not matter to me."

"She's your girlfriend?" Harry asked.

Sirius nodded.

"Gross!"

"Harry!" Hermione shot back.

"What? It's different between us."

"And how so?"

"Cause - cause you're my best friend too and we don't snog and..."

"You kiss each other," Sirius said, "a lot."

"Not snogging," Harry protested.

"Hold hands all the time, snuggle..."

"NOT SNOGGING!"

"Fine." Sirius looked at Remus.

"Whipped," Remus said.

"I'm still your girlfriend," Hermione teased.

"But not snogging," Harry maintained.



“WHO ARE YOU TO TRESPASS IN MISTRESS’S HOUSE?” a voice yelled.

“Kreacher!” Sirius shot back. “You will address the Heir Apparent in an appropriate tone!”

“He shame’s Mistress and then begs Kreacher’s respect?” the old house elf mumbled. “Friend of Mudbloods and Blood Traitors. Poor Mistress.”

“Kreacher!” Sirius yelled. “YOU WILL NOT USE THAT LANGUAGE IN MY HOUSE!”

“Filthy little...” Kreacher began.

“Where is your Mistress?” Sirius asked.

“Mistress be in a painting now. She is free from the shame of her ...” Kreacher could not finish.

Sirius looked at the tapestry. “Damn!”

“Language,” Hermione scolded.

“What is it?” Remus asked.

“Dear old Mum did us a favor and passed away three years ago. Kreacher?”

“Yes, Master Sirius,” Kreacher replied mumbling what were probably insults under his breath.

“I am master of this house.”

“As you say.”

“I want my mother’s portrait removed from the walls and burned, do I make myself clear?”

“Master cannot! Cannot ask such a thing!”



"I am not asking. I will not have this house fouled by her filth! Remove it, burn it! Then burn all her things. Understand?"

Kreacher burst into tears, but walked away.

"Think he'll do it?" Remus asked.

"Has to," Sirius said. "If he refuses an order from the master of the house, he will die. Then again, I never liked the little devil."

"That was mean!" Hermione pouted.

Sirius nodded. "Should have killed the toe rag," Sirius said. "Father lacked the bile to hide me as a lad. Kreacher on the other hand..."

"He - he beat you?" Harry asked paling.

"When Father or Mother told him to," Sirius nodded. "Merlin I hate this house. Let's find that thing and be gone."

They looked through the drawing room and found nothing. Sensei had said it was a locket with an "S" on it and what few objects that were in the room were not even remotely like it.

"Library then," Sirius said. He led the others into the large library and Hermione was immediately enthralled. Potter House had a huge collection, but apparently so did this Black property. Fortunately, her reputation preceded her. "We will take the books," Sirius said. "For today, let's find that object, okay?"

"I guess," Hermione sulked momentarily.

"I think I found it," Harry said almost immediately. Sirius, Remus and the others walks over to a case and saw a locket along with some other objects.

"Don't touch it," Sirius said.

"Wasn't going to," Harry pouted.



Sirius waived his wand over the object and muttered something. After a few seconds, he relaxed. "Okay, this is probably it. It is Dark, much darker than anything else in this room and it does not resonate with Black Family magic, meaning it's not ours. It also is not protected by any curses that I could detect."

Sirius picked up the object with a gloved hand - just in case - and dropped it into a bag.

"That was easy enough," Remus said.

"Sensei did say this was probably the easiest of our tasks this year," Hermione observed.

"Think we should leave," Sirius said. "I really don't want to stick around and reminisce."

"Bad Master!" a voice called from behind. "You is stealing Master Regulus's things! He made Kreacher promise."

The elf looked like he was going to cast magic or something, but never had the chance. Harry, Hermione and Clarice hit him with spell fire first and the Elf was bound in magical ropes.

"What was that?" Remus asked.

"Those ropes contain his magic. Standard O.W.L. level offensive spell for use against opponents capable of wandless attack or defense," Harry explained. "Who stunned him?"

"That would be me," Hermione said. "Suppose we should wake him up?"

"Why bother," Sirius snorted.

"Regulus made Kreacher promise something with regard to that locket," Hermione said. "Sensei never told us how it got here."

"Probably not important at all," Clarice said.



"But aren't you curious?"

"Of course."

"I'll wake him," Harry said. He waived his wand and the elf, still bound, awoke.

"Thieves! Plunders! You will pay!" Kreacher began.

"Kreacher! Silence!," Sirius ordered and the elf went silent. "Should have left him."

"Regulus was your brother, right?" Hermione asked.

Sirius nodded. "Younger brother. He was a year behind me in school. Became a Death Eater before he even finished and died only months after finishing. My Mother was so proud of him. The fool."

"So, how did he come into possession of one of the Horcruxes?" Remus asked. "I doubt Voldemort would entrust it to him. Inner circle, maybe, but not a kid."

Sirius nodded. It did not make much sense.

"Kreacher? Why is this here? How did Regulus come to get it and why is it so important to you?"

Kreacher then began to tell his story. Regulus was the only Black he had liked. Mistress treated him poorly, Sirius was mean to him. Only Regulus cared for him. Naturally, this created a close bond between Kreacher and Regulus, a bond that closed entirely the day Orion Black disowned Sirius. In Kreacher's mind, this made Regulus the future Lord Black and his loyalty shifted from Orion to Regulus. He still followed the older Wizard's orders, but only if they did not interfere with or threaten his new Master.

Regulus had indeed become a Death Eater at sixteen after years of pressure from his mother. He never really wanted to be one, but he was not as defiant a son as his older brother. Almost as soon as he



took the Mark, he wanted out. What they did to people sickened him. He did not really care about Muggles or Muggle Borns, but what Death Eaters did to them was too horrifying for him. It had to stop. Regulus confided in his only real friend, the lonely House Elf.

Not long after becoming a Death Eater, Regulus was ordered to deliver a House Elf to the Dark Lord for an assignment. Reluctantly, Kreacher was sent. Regulus ordered him to do as he was told, but to observe everything and come home as soon as he could. Kreacher was taken to a cave protected by powerful enchantments, but none that were beyond the ability of the elf. He was ordered to drink a horrible potion that tortured his very soul. The Dark Lord then left the object in the basin that had held the vile potion and left Kreacher there to die.

But Kreacher followed his Master's orders and came home. It took weeks for Regulus to nurse the poor elf back to some form of health. He then questioned Kreacher at length about what had happened. Voldemort was not known to be tight lipped, particularly around lowly creatures or people who he was about to kill. He had told Kreacher enough that would allow Regulus to figure out what was going on. Regulus learned the object had to be a Horcrux and that it had to be destroyed if the Dark Lord were ever to be defeated.

Kreacher took him to the cave. He ordered Kreacher to feed him the potions and retrieve the locket. Nothing else was as important. He had given the elf a fake that would replace the real one in the basin. He told the elf that if anything was to happen to him, to take the locket home and destroy it. It was the theft that cost Regulus his life. He was in a delirium when Kreacher was switching the lockets and fell into the lake in the cave. Vile things took him and drowned him. Kreacher, however, followed his Master's final instructions and returned home with the real locket. He tried everything he could to destroy it to no avail, but he would never give up trying. It was his mission in life. Nor would he let anyone steal it. It belonged to his Master.

"Kreacher," Sirius said, "you have kept your promise to my brother as a good elf should, but you have borne this burden long enough. I will take this somewhere safe, for it is not safe here. In time, it will be destroyed as Regulus commanded. I promise you."



“Yes, Master Sirius. It must be destroyed. For Regulus.”

“It will be. I am proud of you and of him. When I release you, I want you to clean this place up, top to bottom. I shall return soon to check on things. If your work is to my liking, this may become a home again. Understand?”

“Yes Master Sirius.”

“And my former orders stand. My mother’s portrait and that damned tapestry are to be removed and burned. Far to long have they cast a shadow over this house.”

“Yes Master Sirius. It will be done.”

“We will be going now so you can be about your work.” He pointed his wand at the elf and muttered again. Nothing happened. He looked at Harry.

“Finite will not work on those,” Harry shrugged. They will release when the time is up. ‘Bout twenty minutes I guess.”

Sirius nodded. These kids were full of surprises. “Right then, one more stop then home for supper.”

---

“I don’t like this Padfoot,” Remus said as the five of them walked down a long, wooded road. “How can you be sure Harry and the others are safe?”

“Perhaps because I found a book that describes the Wards in detail,” Sirius said.

“Enlighten me, then as I seemed to miss that in class.”



“Oh, blood wards or family wards are fascinating. Most complex wards there are, which is why they are, rare, illegal and damned hard to get started. But once they do - wow.”

“Padfoot! We are walking into a potential lion’s den. How can you be so sure? This could go so wrong!”

“While there are many aspects to the wards that are amazing, the reason I know Harry and Clarice are safe is because of the component that protects their secrecy. Nothing really like it out there, although it is somewhat similar to the Fidelius Charm and the Confundus rolled into one. For example, like the Fidelius there is a person that acts as a Secret Keeper - or in this case two.”

“Who?”

“Harry and Clarice. They are the only ones that can reveal their true selves to anyone and even then, if that person is neither trusted, nor trust worthy, the Secret remains safe.”

“And how, pray tell does it remain safe? I know Sensei said it is as if everyone forgot but...”

“Harry Potter is in danger for three reasons,” Sirius said. “First, he’s a Founders Heir. We know Voldie was trying to off them all. Second, he’s the Boy-Who-Lived who every Death Eater out there would love to kill. Finally, Dumbledore’s plans are based upon that damned prophecy which he believes means he needs the lad to become some kind of Martyr. The Confundus aspect means that you can either know who he is or why he is important, but not both at the same time. Harry being the scion of the Ancient and Noble House of Potter does not put a target on his back. As that Harry Potter he’s no more important than any other potential Noble. Harry being the Boy-Who-Lived does make him a target. Unless you are in on the Secret, you can meet Harry Potter, but not the Boy-Who-Lived.”

“What about their friends from school? Surely they know.”

“I can’t say if they do or if they don’t. You’ve seen Harry, though. He doesn’t think much about why he’s famous so I’d be surprised if he



said anything and I know Clarice and Hermione could care less about that. Besides, if they came within two thousand miles of Harry's home, the charm will affect them."

"Two thousand?"

Sirius nodded. "Give or take five hundred."

"And David Greengrass? Mike Evans?" Remus asked.

"David only knows when he's actively working the file. He's not a threat to Harry or Clarice, but as soon as he moves on to another case, Harry and Clarice become his daughters' new friends and are no longer persons of interest to Her Majesty's Government. Mike is a Muggle. It does not affect him just as it does not affect young children."

"And Dumbledore? He has a pensieve, you know."

"And if he were reviewing the right memories, he would remember everything. As soon as he pulled out, it's all lost again."

"And this will last how long?"

"Til he enters Hogwarts for certain," Sirius said.

"Why then?"

"He's a Founders Heir," Sirius said. "That won't be common knowledge as it was not before. But as the Heir, the Cunctus will lift somewhat."

"Somewhat?"

"He will again be The-Boy-Who-Lived."

"You're confident about this?"

"As confident as always."



“And that’s what has me worried, Sirius. You never were cautious and this stunt reeks of recklessness.”

“This is no stunt, Remus. My Head of House requested this meeting. You know I cannot avoid it.”

“Could have left Harry behind.”

“He was requested. Grandfather might not know Harry is the Boy-Who-Lived, but he does know that Harry is my Godson and part of the clan. I admit I don’t know what he wants, but I doubt it’s to snuff the lad.”

“What makes you so sure?”

“Blacks prefer plausible deniability when we off family,” Sirius said. “My Mother may have been an exception. But most of us thought she was a nutter. If this is a murder plot - well we would not be here. And here we are.”

They now stopped before a huge Manor House.

“Where are we?” Harry asked.

“Black Manor. Lord Black requested a meeting and as the Heir Apparent, I cannot refuse. Don’t worry, Harry. Gramps can be a bit stiff, but I am sure this is going to be okay.”

“Kay,” Harry said in a small voice.

---

They entered what had to be the largest house Harry had ever seen. It was even larger than the Potter House in London, although no one could really see more than a single door and window on that house from the street. Harry knew it was magical expanded to its true interior size. This house, on the other hand, did not need magic to be huge on the inside.



They were lead up a wide flight of stairs by a House Elf named Ignus and along a long, wood paneled corridor to a tall, carved wooded door. Ignus knocked and a deep voice called them to enter.

"Please come in," the voice said and they entered a huge office or study. An old man was seated in a wingback chair with a pipe in his mouth. He was wearing what had once been called a smoking jacket. His face gave on the impression of someone who could be both stern and pleasant, perhaps both at the same time.

"Ah Sirius," the old man said. "It is good to see you again. I feared I would pass from this world with one of the few descendants of mine I could stand still rotting in Azkaban for a crime I believed he could not have committed."

"Thank you, Grandfather," Sirius said honestly.

"This was to be a family meeting, Sirius. I see you've brought guests?"

Sirius nodded. "Remus Lupin is my best friend and the closest thing I had to a brother for years, Grandfather."

"I would not have objected, Sirius. I know you two and James Potter were close and anything we say here would probably be duly reported to your close friend. I am surprised, however at the children. Care to explain?"

"My godson and goddaughter..." Sirius began.

"Pardon me Sirius, but that's impossible," the old man said. "I may be old and there are many who would argue I'm senile..."

"And they would be fools," Sirius said.

"Indeed. But I do recall now that your Godson is dead. Did I miss a copy of the Daily Prophet?"

"You did not."



The old man thought for a long moment before gasping. "Blood wards?"

Sirius nodded.

"Illegal."

"Quite," Sirius agreed.

"Yet apparently quite effective. Ancient magic that. So I can assume that anything I learn here today regarding the children, I will promptly forget when you leave?"

Sirius nodded. "At least for the foreseeable future, Grandfather."

"I take it the young lad with you is our dear Cousin and your Godson Harry?"

"It is indeed, Grandfather."

"And the young lady with the matching hair is his sister Clarice?"

"Yes."

"And who is this other charming young lady?"

"Their friend Hermione Granger," Sirius said. "They live with Hermione's folks."

"Magical?"

"Hermione is, yes Grandfather."

"I take it from your careful phrasing that the parents are not?"

"Hermione is an orphan, Grandfather. She was adopted as a baby by a muggle couple that knows of our world."

"Do we know her heritage?"



"Indeed. She is from an ancient line."

"But not necessarily Pureblood?"

"Half."

"Good to hear. Keeps magic strong marrying into newer magic every few generations or so. You do know if it were up to me Pureblood marriages would be the exception not the rule."

"You've told me that for as long as I can remember."

"Pity I could not put my beliefs into practice. Oh sure, there were exceptions who did not follow the wrong path. Too few, if you ask me."

"Right then children. I am Lord Arcturus Black, Head of the Ancient and Noble House of Black and Sirius's Grandfather. Sirius is fortunately once again the Heir Apparent and will take my place as head of this house when I pass on, which I regret will be sooner rather than later."

"Grandfather?"

"You needn't worry about me expiring here and now, Sirius. I'm eighty-seven. Old? True. Hardly over the hill, although there are many who think so."

"You always played a delicate political game, Grandfather."

"What my Grandson is saying," Lord Black said to the children, "is I never took a stand on anything. Really was not into the machinations of the political arena, but as I have an ancestral seat in the Wizengamot, I am expected to make an appearance. Then again, my lack of a public political agenda may explain why I am the longest lived Black in the last five generations."

"Why's that?" Harry asked.

"The House of Black has had issues, young Harry," Lord Black said. "We were split in two during the last War. Sirius fought on one side,



his younger brother on the other. War tends to shorten life. However the War was a recent thing. Lord Black has an unfortunate tendency to die from unnatural causes. My father was poisoned by a rival. My grandfather was gunned down in Diagon Alley by a Muggle for taking liberties with the man's daughter at Hogwarts. The story for many of my predecessors is depressingly similar. I have managed to live to a ripe age by not rocking any boats. But I asked Sirius here today to talk of the future of this House.

"So, young Master Potter is living with Muggles?" The question was directed to Sirius.

"He is and has been for most of his life, Grandfather."

"And his magical training?"

Sirius told his Grandfather about the Watanabe school.

"I see. And you? Where do you fit in?"

"I am their magical minder. The Grangers have jobs, so I keep an eye on them during the day for now. I am considering certain possibilities, but the Healers have told me to wait about six months before..."

"Ah," Lord Black said. "Yes, Azkaban. You must know how disappointed I was to believe that you were..."

"I was never a Death Eater, Grandfather," Sirius said baring his left arm. "And you never tried to..."

"Given the sheer number of Death Eaters who disgraced this House, what was I to think? Your own brother! With the exception of your Cousin Andy, it seemed all the others either were, were married to one or went out of their way to finance them! I was shocked to believe you were one, given that you're the only Black in generations who saw fit not to get sorted into that den of evil known as Slytherin House. There are only a handful of us who survived that House without leaning towards the Dark.



“Besides, I did inquire! Crouch said the proof was incontrovertible! They had a confession and he said you were marked!”

Sirius nodded. “I figured you would have inquired. I also figured you would not have spent a knut trying to buy my way out.”

“You know I never condoned that, Sirius.”

Sirius nodded. “And you had to keep a low profile.”

“Indeed. And even then it was not low enough.”

“Excuse me?”

“Lucius Malfoy has made certain - er - efforts to secure his demon spawn son the position of the next Lord Black.”

“A Death Eater? Surely you would not allow that!”

“When you were incarcerated, I named Harry as Heir Apparent. I will not let the family fortune or title fall to a French usurper who’s not descended from the male line! Harry, of course, is from a most Ancient House. And his Great-grandmother Cousin Dorea was one of the few Blacks who did not go bad. Malfoy is as bad as they come and would ruin this House were he to get his hands on it.”

“Inner circle,” Sirius agreed. “He avoided Azkaban.”

“At a cost. He covets this House because it is wealthy and appeared vulnerable. He squandered most of his family wealth avoiding prison. And we both know the frog wants a seat on the Wizengamot. Merlin forbid a foreigner!”

“With relatives in key places in the French magical government,” Sirius agreed. “at least there were a few years back.”

“Still are. The albino would probably consult with his relations regarding any important votes...”



“Giving the French an important and powerful voice in our own affairs.”

“You can see my dilemma at the time. Regulus was dead. You were an accused Death Eater rotting in prison. There were only two males in House Black who could succeed me. Harry and the son of a spy. I would not have this House handed over to a Death Eater and a foreign power, so I named Harry your successor. For good measure, should that be challenged by Malfoy, his wife and child will be disowned and cast out.”

“Pity,” Sirius said. “I liked Cissy once. Why she married...”

“She saw what happened to Andy, Sirius. I never ratified the disowning of her. She is one who is not a blemish on the House. I have offered Cissy an annulment, but the poor girl has rebuked me.”

“So what family issues do you wish to discuss Grandfather? You already seem to have made Harry a designated successor. Not that I wanted to be Head of House.”

“Are you seeing anyone, Sirius?”

Sirius nodded.

“Is this serious or another one of your indulgences?”

“I am Sirius,” Sirius replied with a smirk, “and I hope this is the one, Grandfather.”

“Good. A chance for a pure heir...”

“She’s a Muggle Born, Grandfather.”

“I did not mean Pureblood, you cad! I meant avoiding the violence over a struggle for succession between Malfoy and the closer relations! I have barely been able to leave this Estate these past few years. Malfoy cannot get me here, but it seems he or his allies try whenever I leave! For the good of this House and Country, he must not be in a position to name or challenge my successor.”



“And the fact that should I have a son, he will not be a Pureblood does not bother you, Grandfather?”

“Unlike your father, my father grandfather and others before me, I know what our family motto originally meant, Sirius. It’s here in the House Library. Tujours Pur was not a blood status thing. It originally meant Pure of Heart! I need not tell you the number of Blacks that real motto has applied to in the last two hundred years can probably be counted on two hands with fingers to spare! I will not allow this House to fall completely within the control of the Enemy’s former fellow travelers!”

“And what is it you want from me, Grandfather? Not that I don’t enjoy your jaded view of our family and it’s petty if lethal squabbles.”

“Before you arrived today, I was going to recommend you take our House Seat in the Wizengamot.”

Sirius rolled his eyes. “Oh joy,” he said sarcastically. “I would so love that.”

“You’re hatred for Pureblood politics is precisely why I want you there. Now, you do not have to attend every session. Many not many at all. Vote as you see fit. Although I will remind you of votes that could have an adverse impact on our finances.”

“Heaven forbid we vote our way out of a fortune,” Sirius grumbled.

“I was also going to strongly suggest you take a wife. There are thirty-two open contracts for marriage that have not been withdrawn...”

“Not interested, Grandfather. Already got a girl for now.”

“But she’s not yet your wife, Sirius.”

“Emphasis on ‘not yet.’ Bloody hell, Grandfather. Thirty-two? I was an all but convicted murderer stuck in Azkaban for who knows how long and I still have thirty-two?”



“Arguably none of them are the pick of any litter.”

“More like they couldn’t get laid in a Navy port.”

“Laid?” Harry asked.

“Grown-up term, Harry,” Sirius said.

“For what?”

“For something we’ll talk about some years for now.”

“Oh.”

“Right, Grandfather. Like I’ll accept those if for some reason no real woman will have me. Now you said something about Harry?”

“Indeed. I designated him as my successor and heir in the event of my death some time ago. That was, of course, before everyone believed he went off into the great unknown ahead of me. I would like that designation to stand, Sirius. Just in case.”

Sirius nodded.

“In fact, I think it might be best to divide the Black money from the Black politics.”

“In what way, Grandfather?”

“Should you have a Son, and I pray you do Sirius, he will inherit the Estate. But the titles and political stuff? Split them. Name Harry as the next Heir Apparent. As the next Lord Potter, he is in no need for money. As Lord Potter, our House political intrigues would not affect him...”

“You don’t think Malfoy would have a go at him?”

“I do not.”

“Why not?”



“Even Malfoy is not stupid enough to attack the Head of another House. He can come at me without raising the ire of law enforcement. But to attack an unaffiliated House? He knows he would lose everything and then his life, even if he succeeded and that git is too selfish to risk his effete little neck in a Blood Feud. And our money without the political backing is not as interesting.”

“I’ll keep that in mind.”

“It was a pleasure meeting the three of you,” Lord Black said to the children, effectively ending the very strange meeting. “And Sirius?”

“Yes Grandfather?”

“Even though I might not remember these children later, please feel free to bring them round for a visit now and then.”

“I’ll try, Grandfather.”

---

The five returned to Potter Manor. Harry left terribly confused by the encounter. But the Horcrux was recovered and now sat safely in the vault in the basement. One down and five more to go.



## CHAPTER THIRTY-ONE: SCHOOL & FRIENDS

SATURDAY, AUGUST 26, 1988 - POTTER HOUSE, LONDON, U.K.

Harry and the others expected their guest to arrive around nine that morning. The adults had put their heads together and agreed that having the kids learn and practice magic was a good idea even at their young ages and that Harry, Hermione and Clarice seemed to make good teachers. True, it would be wandless magics, but this was a useful skill set to develop. Minerva had owled parents who might have interested students, as did Mike Evans and David Greengrass who knew magical families from work and, in Mike's case, from St. George's School.

Harry, Hermione and Clarice were waiting at the fireplace in the "Entry Parlor." All three were excited as they had fun the last time and there was so much they thought they could help their friends with. The first arrivals shocked them. Three children with flaming red hair piled out of the fireplace having floored in from their home. For the three "teachers," it had been ages since they met as they met these three in Diagon Alley before they headed off to Japan. They recognized the three and knew they were Weasleys. The two boys were the twins, whose names they had forgotten and they had also forgotten the girl's name. For them, it had been over four years since they had ice cream with the Weasleys.

"Looks like they forgot our names, Forge," one of the boys said.

"Right you are Gred," the other replied. "George Weasley," he added. "The person pretending to look like me is Fred and this is our little, baby sister, Ginny."

"I am NOT a baby!" Ginny protested. "I'm seven now!"

"Here that George? Ginny mentioned nothing about eight?"

"Ron's not here, Fred."

"Where is the grumpy one," Clarice asked.



“Didn’t wanna come,” Ginny said. “Heard we would be learning things and stuff.”

“He’s afraid reading may be involved,” George added.

“And Ickleronniekins can’t read.”

“Drives Mum spare, that one.”

“Yup. Thinks if it ain’t Quidditch or Chess, he don’t need to know about it yet.”

“Or ever, the way he goes on about it.”

“What a baby,” Ginny huffed.

“Have to agree with you there, Gin,” Fred said. “You may be the youngest...”

“And only girl,” George added.

“But Ronnie is the baby in the house.”

“Besides, he’d hate it here,” Ginny said.

“Why?” Harry asked.

“Cause this house is big and he hates not having everything he wants.”

“That and we know of some who are coming,” Fred said. “Greengrasses right?”

Hermione and the others nodded.

“Their parents were in Slytherin at school,” Fred said. “Ronnie believes all Sytherin are scum.”

“Do you?” Clarice asked.



“Never met one,” Fred said. “But I find it hard to believe they all are, or that their kids must be.”

“Good, ‘cause they’re our friends too.”

A loud clatter arose from the fireplace and the children turned to see a teenage girl with bright yellow hair rising to her feet. “Sorry ‘bout that,” she said. “Bit clumsy.”

“No worries,” Harry said.

“You must be Cousin Harry,” the girl said. “Name’s Tomks. I’m Sirius Black’s first cousin or something.”

“Harry,” Harry said. “My sister Clarice and our best friend Hermione. Are you here for...”

“Oh yes,” Tonks said. “Mum got a letter from Sirius ‘bout you lot and what you could teach and it sounds wicked! I mean they don’t teach that stuff at Hogwarts at all!”

“You’re at Hogwarts?” Hermione asked.

“Well, not right now, am I? Still on Summer Hols and such. Be starting my Fourth Year September 1st.”

“So you’re only here for today?”

“Mum’s working things out with Professor McGonagall. She’s the Deputy Headmistress, you know. She says I might get permission to come here during the school year, assuming I’m not in detention or something.”

“What House,” Fred asked.

Tonks knew what he meant. “Odd one really. Mum was a Slytherin and Dad was a Raven. Somehow I wound up in Hufflepuff, not that I’m complaining mind.”

“Is Tonks your real name?” Clarice asked.



“Last name, really. I don’t like my first one.”

“What is it?”

“Nope. Not telling.”

“It can’t be that bad,” Harry said.

“It is. It’s an old family name and I hate it.”

“What is it?” Ginny asked. “Can’t be as bad as mine. Ginevra - honestly. Makes me sound old! People who like me call me Ginny.”

“Fine! It’s Nymphadora! Anyone laughs and I do have a wand and know how to use it!”

“Who’s laughing,” Harry deadpanned.

“It’s worse than mine,” Ginny said.

“You got a middle name?” Harry asked.

“No,” Tonks sighed.

“Well, I’m not going to call my only magical cousin Tonks,” Harry said. “That’s wrong too! How about...”

“Nothing with ‘Nymph’,” Tonks growled. “That’s the part I hate.”

“Dory?”

“That’s a kind a boat, Harry,” Hermione said.

“Dora, then?”

Tonks thought for a while. “I suppose,” she sighed. “That’s not too bad.”

“Dora it is, then.”



"Welcome Cousin Dora," Clarice said.

"Cool!" Dora Tonks replied. "Finally got magical cousins who aren't gits."

"You're talking 'bout that Malfoy kid, right?" Clarice asked.

"Yeah. Never met him and don't want to." Dora Tonks replied.

"We don't either," Clarice said.

Over the next several minutes, more and more children seemed to pour through the floo. Soon there were thirty "students" in the Entry Parlor. As soon as the influx of students stopped, Harry and the others led them from the Parlor and to what he had been told was a Ballroom. On Saturdays, this would become their classroom and training room. Thirty chairs were set out and the "students" were asked to find a seat. They did so and watched as an other witch and two younger - but still much older than any of them - wizards entered.

"Professor McGonagall?" Dora Tonks asked.

"Ah, Miss Tonks," Minerva said. "I'm am glad you could make it."

"You're our teacher?"

"No. I am a Minder. I and the other adults here can help out, but we are here mainly to provide adequate supervision. You all behave yourselves, and we don't exist."

"Who's Professor McGonagall?" a voice asked.

"She's teaches Transfiguration at Hogwarts and is Deputy Headmistress," Dora said. "No idea why she's here."

"Miss Tonks is correct," Minerva said. "However, I am not here in that capacity. You see, your three young hosts spent this summer at a magical school in Japan. Yes they are young. Here and elsewhere in Europe, you must be eleven to begin your formal magical education."



That is not true elsewhere. In much of the world, magical education begins between the ages of six and eight, depending upon the country. Also, unlike here, wandless magic is taught.”

“Why is it not taught here?” a voice asked.

“Cause it’s bloody hard,” another said.

“Is it?” Harry asked. “Are you saying you’ve never done accidental magic?”

“Er, no, but...”

“Every witch and wizard is born with that ability,” Harry went on. “It is an ability, however, we can lose if we do not develop it. For most of us, if we have not begun to learn the wandless arts before age eighteen, it is almost impossible to learn them at all. The younger, it seems, the better. Some of you were here a while back for my birthday. Those who were all were taught and all were able to perform a wandless charm and transfiguration by the time they left. We want to continue teaching our friends and it would be wrong to exclude their friends, don’t you think? Hence, the reason you all are here. Now, we don’t know all of you, so we’ll call your name. When called, please stand, say hi, tell us your age, what magical school you are either attending or probably going to attend and you can tell us something about yourselves or your family if you wish.”

Harry sat down and Clarice stood holding a piece of parchment.

“Susan Bones,” Clarice said.

A young, red haired girl stood. “Hi,” she said blushing. “I’m Susan. I’m eight. My parents died in the war and I live with my Auntie who’s an Auror. My family goes to Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry, or at least they did. I have no brothers or sisters.” She then sat down.

“Terrance Boot?”

A dark haired boy stood. “My friends call me Terry,” he said. “I’m also eight and my parents went to Hogwarts.”



“Millicent Bulstrode?”

A rather large girl stood. “Call me Millie. My family goes to Hogwarts and I’m eight.”

“Regina Darcy?”

An older girl stood. “I’m called Reggie. Only my Mum calls me that and only when she is mad. My best friend is Aaron Evans, who’s here. I’m ten and my family has attended St. George’s School of Magic in London for generations.”

And so the introductions continued. Colin Dunbar was fifteen and had finished his Fourth Year at St. George’s. Then came Harry’s cousins, a point made by Aaron when he was introduced. Jason had just taken his owls, Amber had finished her third year, Michelle her First. Aaron was ten and Billy and Cynthia eight year olds and twins. All were St. George’s students or likely to go there. The Greengrass sisters, Astoria and Daphne were next and their parents had gone to Hogwarts. Andrew Kirke was nine, and a friend of the Evans family. He was a St. George’s probable. Ernie McMillan, who was also an Evans friend, was a Hogwarts legacy. Megan Meeks was nine and probably bound for St. George’s. Justin and Robert Parker were brothers. Justin had finished his Fifth Year at St. George’s and “Bobby” his First. There were two twin girls Harry’s age: Padma and Parvati Patil. Their family had moved here from India and their Dad worked with Mr. Evans. They did not know where they were likely to be sent for magical school. Trisha Powell had finished her Third Year at St. George’s. Roger Sluvey was nine and from a St. George’s family. Ian Smith had finished his Fifth Year at St. George’s. Alicia Spinnet was ten, loved Quidditch and was probably going to Hogwarts. Dora Tonks was also Harry’s Cousin and had finished her Third Year at Hogwarts. Lisa Turpin was eight and from a Hogwarts family. Last but not least were the three Weasleys.

All told, there were thirty “students.” Sixteen were from St. George’s families, twelve Hogwarts and the Patil twins who did not know yet. The class was equally divided boys and girls and ranged in age from six (Astoria Greengrass) to sixteen.



“Right then,” Minerva said, “now I’d like to introduce you to your instructors. All three went to the Watanabe School in July. During their summer sessions, the school is under time compression which, if you do not know what that means is for each day you experienced here in July, they experienced fifty days at that school. All three have completed their magical education up through their O.W.L.s.”

“No way,” a voice said.

“First, we have Clarice Jameson. She is seven eleven, meaning she is seven years old in regular time but has experienced eleven years of life. She finished this summer third in her class with all outstanding on her O.W.L.s and With Distinctions in Charms and Ritual Magics. She lost in the quarter finals of the school’s magical dueling tournament, which had over 200 participants.”

“Whoa!” Tonks said.

“Who indeed, Miss Tonks. Next is her housemate Hermione Granger. Clarice and her brother live with Hermione and her folks. Hermione is eight thirteen, meaning her real age is eight going on nine but she has experienced thirteen years of life. Hermione was first in her class this summer again with all outstanding on her O.W.L.s. She attained With Distinctions in Arithmancy and Ancient Runes and Honors in Transfiguration, meaning she achieved the highest score in the world in that subject on the ICW exams. She beat Clarice in the quarter finals only to lose in the semi-finals.

“Finally, we have Clarice’s older brother Harry Potter...”

“No way! As in The Boy-Who-Lived?” a voice asked.

“They said he was dead,” another added.

Harry was not worried. He knew children would remember anyway and the wards would prevent anyone else from spilling the secret. Still, he was not comfortable with that moniker. “Just Harry is fine,” Harry said.



“Harry was second in his class in Japan,” Minerva said. “He is eight twelve. Like the others, all Outstandings on his O.W.L.s with a With Distinction in Defense and Honors in Potions. He beat Hermione in the semi-finals before winning the school dueling title in the finals.

“Now you all should know that they teach both wand and wandless magic from the first day of class practically. To the extent any magic can be done either way, they are expected to be able to do it both ways. They also teach silent spell casting from the first. I have observed classes there. True, there are wand spells that required verbal incantations to work, but most do not so they are not taught the incantations.”

“So we’re supposed to learn from some kids?” one of the older students asked.

Hermione and Harry looked at each other. Clarice saw what was coming and cast the necessary shields to prevent anyone else from being hit by errant spell fire. The older two drew their wands and almost immediately Clarice yelled “Hajime!”

Almost two thirds of the students were not at their last demonstration. To say they were impressed was an understatement. They had never even heard of dueling like that before. The speed both physical and magical had them all amazed. Five minutes in Clarice, who was acting as judge yelled “Ipon!” Both combatants stopped and looked at her in confusion.

“She never hit me,” Harry protested.

“And he didn’t hit me!” Hermione added.

“You’ve made your point,” Clarice said. “Don’t need another twenty minutes of that, do we?”

“You’re no fun,” Harry chuckled. He then turned to the students. “Any questions?”

“So this training makes us wicked powerful?” a voice asked.



"No," Harry said. "With training and practice, you will reach your potential. But power is like the body. It varies from person to person and changes with age. I am eight years old. I have skills. But power? I AM EIGHT YEARS OLD!"

"I will demonstrate the difference between skill and power. Jason? Could you come up here?"

A confused Jason Evans walked up. He was at least a foot taller than Harry and certainly looked like he was in excellent shape.

"You will all note Jason is a lot bigger than I am. We are now going to fist fight muggle style..."

"We are?" Jason asked.

"Or at least he will try his best to hit me. I will not try and hit back. No magic will be used by either of us." Harry looked at Jason. "Agreed?"

"I - I guess. Why?"

"Just try and hit me. I dare you," Harry growled.

Jason shrugged and lunged figuring he really did not have to try. After five minutes, he was trying like hell. The little kid was either not there when his fist was supposed to connect or he was winding up on his back. He knew Harry was not using magic. The kid was making him look...and he was thrown again.

"STOP!" another voice commended.

Harry looked down at his surprised opponent. "Truce cousin?" he asked.

"What was that?" Jason asked.

"We also studied non-magical martial arts. I am a black belt in Karate and Aikido."

"Can you teach as well?"



“To attain that belt, I must be willing to,” Harry said.

“C-cool.”

“We’re not done yet,” Harry said. “Round two you cannot help but win.”

“I don’t understand.”

“On your feet. You’ll see where I’m going.”

“Okay.”

“That,” Harry said in a loud voice for all to hear, “was skill. Had he actually hit me ... it would not have been a good day for me. Had I hit him, it would not have been as bad a day for him. He could not hit me because I am trained and skilled in certain fighting techniques and he is not. But, when it comes to physical power - and probably magical as well - he can and should beat me easily. We are now going to wrestle. He cannot punch, and neither can I. This is not about dodging your opponent but overpowering them. First one pinned loses. Ready Jason?”

Jason blinked. Harry lunged at him and tried to tackle him. Harry was pinned in five seconds.

“Feel better?” Harry asked.

“A bit,” Jason said. “You will teach me that skill stuff?”

“Sure.”

Jason helped Harry to his feet.

“That is power,” Harry said to the class. “It’s the same way with magic. I can out skill an older opponent, but if it comes down to power ... well you saw the results and I was trying.”



“Why do we need wands at all?” a voice asked. “I mean why don't they teach us wandless magic?”

“That is not an easy question,” Hermione said. “I guess the reason they really do not teach it is custom. Wandless magic died out here and throughout much of Europe ages ago. The reasons are many. Wands are easier to use and to teach and you can begin teaching later than you can with wandless magic. While through O.W.L.s, there is no spell whose effect cannot be achieved without a wand, as we move beyond that level, there are spells that can only be achieved with a wand. Wands are more focused and precise in their effects. That explains their utility, not why both are not taught. Again, I think it's custom.

“Magic and magic users have been around for as long as any can record: ten thousand years or more. For much of history, there was no such thing as a wand and all magic was wandless. We do not know when the wand was invented nor by whom. Best guess was not later than 600 B.C. in what is now Italy. The Roman magic users adopted it because of its precision and comparative ease of use. It gave them an advantage over their enemies. A younger, less trained wand carrier could fight a power wandless wizard on almost even terms.

“The wand spread throughout much of what is now Europe, North Africa and the Middle East because of the Romans and Alexander the Great either through trade or conquest. Then, the tool stopped for centuries. Scandinavia and what is now Russia did not begin using wands until the age of the Vikings. Wands did not move East until the Mongols. They did not reach Japan until around 1500 and the Americas, Pacific, Africa and India until sometime later. There is a theory that we forgot most wandless magics. There is another that adds that some of our leaders looked down on wandless magics with contempt, just as the Muggle Europeans looked down on foreign cultures. No one really knows the truth. Suffices to say, we stopped teaching most wandless magics ages ago and most other cultures did not. Those of us who left these shores relearned the wandless magics when they encountered wandless magic users.



"It is a forgotten art here," Clarice continued. "That is perhaps the easiest way to say it. All wandless magics require a degree of mental discipline that wand magic does not. That's why it is easier to teach wand magic. To really begin wandless magic, you must also learn mental discipline. With such discipline, which is not as hard to learn as you might think, you will be able to bend your magic to your will. That's all wandless magic is. You learn to control and command your magic.

"Yes. We will be teaching you wandless magics. After all, that's the fun stuff. But the most important stuff you will be learning here is the mental disciplines. That is what makes magic and learning easier. If you develop these skills, do not be surprised if you suddenly find yourselves doing loads better in school. You may find that the next top of your class students are all seated here today.

"With the techniques we will be teaching you," Harry continued, "you will all be able to learn occlumency."

"Wicked," an older student said.

"What's that?" Astoria Greengrass asked.

"It is the art of protecting your mind from magical attack," Harry said. "If sufficiently developed, it can be of great benefit to you. In addition to the fact that you can block attempts to read your emotions and find your secrets through Legilimency, you can also become relatively immune to mental attacks and all forms of compulsion magic. Among other things, this includes the ability to throw off the Imperious Curse to some extent..."

"Some extent?" a voice asked.

"That curse will still work if the caster is trying to make you do something you wanted to do anyway. For example, if there were a girl here I really wanted to kiss, but could not bring myself to do so, even with Occlumency, I could still be compelled to kiss her."

"Eew!" several of the younger kids moaned.



“It’s just an example. The same effect is true with love potions - a rather nasty branch of magic otherwise. A love potion will not work on you if you didn’t already love the person. Even then, it will only lower your inhibitions. So, these skills have loads of uses.”

“Finally,” Hermione continued, “it will allow you to learn Shifting.”

“What’s that?” Tonks asked.

“That was how Harry and I were jumping all over the place. It is a very useful means of magical travel. And no, it is not Apparition. Apparition’s advantage is it requires less discipline to learn and use. Under stress, you can still do it once you learn how. Of course, there is the chance if you’re under too much stress that you’ll splinch - a fate not possible with Shifting. You either shift or you do not. You can also apparate blind as it were. You really don’t need to know the location well to get there. Shifting cannot be done blind. Shifting, however, has other advantages. I can shift from here to Kyoto in one jump. If I have been there before, I can shift there, even if it is across an ocean or on the far side of the world. Likewise, there are no anti-shifting wards.”

“And,” Clarice said, “it is not regulated by the Ministry.”

“Wicked!” several voices chorused.

“Right then,” Clarice said, “Three groups of ten and the fun can begin.”

---

The first lessons were a resounding success. Every student managed controlled wandless magic and demonstrated the beginning mind magic exercises which they were asked to practice every day. It would help with everything, they were told.

It was not all magic, though. They had a large lunch in the banquet hall and a few hours to hang out and get to know each other or play in the grounds, swim in the pool and just be kids. Just before they left,



the students asked if they could do this on Sundays as well and if they could include some of that Martial Arts stuff. Harry and the others agreed, but added that the next day was booked. Yet it was agreed that the following weekend would be at Potter House. Arrangements were made to allow all the students to spend the night beginning on Friday evening if they wanted to. It was not required and the full time residents did not know who would take them up on the offer, but it was there if they wanted.

Attendance was easy for the St. Geroge's students. While it was a boarding school, unlike Hogwarts you were not required to spend weekends there unless you were in detention or were having academic difficulties. Students who lived in London were not even required to spend their week nights at the school, except for detentions or extra study.

The one question was Tonks. Hogwarts was a full time boarding school and was not located anywhere near a city. Just beyond its gates was the village of Hogsmeade. It was said to be the only all magical village in Britain, yet with only 400 residents, there were few children of school age who could easily commute home, maybe one or two at any given time.

However, occasionally there were students with special magical gifts who required specialized instruction that Hogwarts could not provide. Those students or their families could ask for permission to take such training on the weekends. All they needed was permission from their parents, their Head of House and approval from the Deputy Headmistress. Tonks, it turned out, was a metamorphagus, a witch who could change her appearance at will. It was a rare talent that could not be taught and to be developed fully required special instruction.

Minerva knew she received such instruction over the summers and had been instructed since she was five. Still, it was an excuse. By the time she started Hogwarts in about a week, she would have permission to leave the school on Fridays for London and her new "Special Instruction." She would return Sunday evenings. Tonks would be told, however, that her permission would not get her out of detentions and could be restricted if she struggled in her class work.



At dinner, the adults were entertained by a heated debate between the three young teachers. Hermione wanted to get all kinds of books and assign reading and such. The Potters, while not opposed in general, felt that they should focus on the tasks at hand. They recommended buying the books, but unless the next lessons absolutely required it, reading would be suggested, not required. Clarice reminded Hermione that most of the kids had real school work and it would not be fair to them to pile on additional work. Hermione finally agreed. They would mail order 30 books on Mind Magics (actually 30 three volume sets), the same books they had at school. They would also order 30 books on Shifting eventually as well as 30 on dueling tactics and magic.

After dinner, Sensei made his appearance. As it had been from the day Harry first awoke in hospital, Sensei showed up about once or twice a week. However, he had become more of a sounding board than a lecturer. He said there would be more 'lectures' in the future, but they were not necessary right now and he was enjoying watching the three learn and grow, make friends and be kids. He knew that his Harry and Hermione never had really been kids.

"I noticed Neville Longbottom and Luna Lovegood were not among the students," Sensei said.

"Well," Minerva replied. "It seems the Lovegoods are out of the country looking for some creature or another. They're not expected back until the middle of September according to a sign on the door of the Quibbler office in Ottery St. Catchpole. I did speak with Neville's grandmother, but she did not think it was worth it. She seems to be convinced Neville is a Squib."

"I can assure you he is not. He just has not been pushed into it, yet."

"Pushed into what?" Harry asked.

"Accidental magic."

"Oh."



Sensei sighed. "When I was sent back, I had a mission. It was to help Harry avoid the mistakes that will otherwise be made that lead to the end of everything. Got a pretty good head start, I think. As you may recall, my target arrival date was July 1995. I missed that one by a bit.

"I was given secondary protocols in the event I over shot my arrival date. One was to get Harry away from the Dursleys and keep him away. Done. I am still amazed at how easy it was. The other was to help the others, if I could.

"As I am a projection of me, I knew what I meant. I knew who the others were and why they need or needed help. One was Sirius, who for me and even though I only knew him for two years, was the closest thing I had to a father. I was to help him win his freedom sooner rather than never. In my time, he escaped from prison. He lived the rest of his life a fugitive, which may have contributed to his untimely demise. And that's all I will say on that as that future is now gone forever. By helping you, Sirius, it seems I also helped Remus and for that I am pleased. Remus had a hard life because of his condition. Now..."

"Now I have a future, thanks to the lot of you," Remus said softly.

"I was also expected to help Clarice if I could. I knew little about her. Had no idea how I could find her before she began Hogwarts much less help her. It is amazing how much luck factors into things. I have no doubt her adoptive parents died in my time. I cannot imagine what happened to her in my time. I'd like to think she is happier now than she was then. She has friends and family who adore her and ... well. All I knew about my sister was that she died in the camps. That will not happen now.

"I was also expected to help Neville Longbottom. He never had a friend before he went to Hogwarts and that hurt him even if he never said so. Being thought a Squib is not a good thing. His Gran, while a bit stiff, did love him. But she was acutely aware of the prejudice in this society. Neville could never really fit in with Muggles raised in a magical home. And magicals his own age would have picked on him. Add to that his parents, alive and yet not alive and... he's a lonely boy as we speak."



"His parents?" Harry asked.

"Frank and Alice were Aurors," Sensei said. "In late November of '81, they were attacked and tortured by four Death Eaters: Rodolphus, Rastaban and Bellatrix Lestrange and one Barty Crouch, Jr. They were driven insane and lived their lives in long term care at St. Mungo's. Neville visits them often, but it's hard for him as neither of them can speak or even react to him."

"That's so sad," Hermione sniffed.

"Bellatrix?" Sirius asked.

Sensei nodded.

"You know her?" Harry asked.

Sirius nodded. "Vicious Death Eater and regrettably one of the Blacks my Grandfather is on about. You met Tonks today."

Harry nodded.

"What do you think?"

"I like her. She's nice and she's funny."

"Bellatrix is her Aunt."

"So she's evil?"

"No Harry," Sensei and Sirius said in unison.

"Tonks was a lovely person in my time," Sensei said. "Her mother was disowned by her grandfather for marrying a Muggle Born. Aside from Sirius, she had no contact with the rest of her family. Well, Sirius and me, I guess."

"So I am evil?" Harry asked.



“Harry,” Sirius said. “Not all Blacks are evil. Grandfather is not. He is sneaky, a bit aloof, and cunning, but not evil. He hates the Pureblood agenda but knows that standing up makes him a bigger target than he already is. I’m not evil - at least I don’t think I am. Dora’s parents are not. Dora’s Aunt Cissy was not. She married an evil man and I have no idea if she is the wonderful woman I once knew. Your Great-grandmother was not. But yes. A fair few Blacks are or were.” Sirius shrugged. “Evil is not a born condition. It is a choice. The evil Blacks chose to be that. The good black chose not to be.”

Harry nodded.

“Every child needs a family,” Sensei said, “one that loves them, cares for them and supports them. But parents, brothers and sisters are not enough. They need friends too. It’s human nature. More important, it is through our friendships that we learn how to interact with people and from them and our family, learn to be confident. Neville Longbottom needs friends now. My Hermione and I became his friends, but he would be better off if he had friends now and not years from now.

“Last but not least, I was to help Luna Lovegood if I could.”

“Not me?” Hermione asked.

Sensei shook his head. “I am sorry, Hermione. I never knew your real history. In my time you were a Muggle Born. I had absolutely no problem with that as you were such a gifted witch, brilliant friend and all of that and I loved my Hermione very much and always did. But I could not have come back to help you before Hogwarts because I could not tell you or let you learn about magic. Were Harry to have done that, it would have been trouble for him.

“In my time, you were never told about your true family. I don’t really know why but I can make an educated guess.”

“Why?” Hermione asked in a trembling voice.

“There came a time several years from now when you sent your parents off into hiding because the next War was going badly. You



altered their memories both for their protection and in the off chance that you might die. You made them forget all about you. The spell was supposed to be totally reversible. It turned out it was not. They remembered you I know. They seemed to have forgotten about your real parents. As Minerva had agreed not to reveal that to you on her own, and as she died before they did years and years later, well ... My Hermione never learned that. I never knew that about you until this time around. I'm sorry."

"S'okay," Hermione said with a whimper earning a tender hug from Harry.

"Had the original me known the truth, you would have been one of the others I was sent here to help if I could."

"Thanks," Hermione said. "So about this Luna?"

"Before I became her friend, she lived a lonely life," Sensei said. "I do not know the details, but the Luna I knew had not had a friend in years. It was really not her fault. She's a lovely person. Other things happened to her.

"One has already happened. I don't know exactly what. About a year ago, she lost her best friend. You've met the girl. It's Ginny Weasley. I don't think they had a falling out really as they were friends again later. But I do know from my Ginny that they were always together until about a year ago and then they were not. I suspect Ginny's Mum is the reason, but do not know. Ginny was eventually groomed to be my wife. I think that might be when she and Luna were no longer allowed to play together, but I do not know.

"I do know that Luna has no friends right now. I also know that something may happen in the next two years that will crush her further. She went through years without friends and not believing she deserved them. She was in her Fourth Year when she became mine. Before then, she was picked on and bullied all the time. She does not deserve that future."

"No," Harry agreed, "neither of them do."



“So how can we become their friends?” Hermione asked.

“I would not recommend bringing them here for classes yet,” Rose Granger said. The others looked at her. “They are lonely and isolated. To be thrown into that might be a bit much for them right now. Become their friends and with that they can adapt. You can teach them too until then, but only after they warm up to you.”

“In other words,” Robert said, “if they cannot come to these three, then these three go to them.”

“How?” Harry asked.

“Longbottom’s easy,” Sirius said. “I’ve been to their Manor. It’s outside of Colne in Lancashire, but I could take you to their place. No clue about the Lovegoods, though.”

“Their place is three miles due east of Burrow,” Sensei said.

“The what?” several voices asked.

“It’s where the Weasley’s live. You can Floo there and such.”

“We will need an excuse,” Sirius suggested.

“Play dates,” Rose said. “We kind of agreed to that and the younger ones are not in school.”

“Get’s us to Devon,” Sirius said, “but not to the Lovegoods.”

“Brooms,” Sensei said. “You bought these three Comet 260’s and they have not even had a chance with them. The Weasley’s have a hidden Quidditch Pitch in some woods on their property. Take them there to fly. Fred and George are good flyers and can help and Ginny probably knows how by now as well, although none of her brothers know yet. You take them their, teach them to fly and recon to the east when you can. Later, when you find the Lovegood place, you can take them there.”

“Brilliant! So who first?” Sirius asked.



“Longbottom,” Minerva said. “Lovegoods are gone for weeks.”

“Right then. We’ll figure this out. Get the kids to Lancashire and teach them to fly in Devon. Loads of fun!” Sirius laughed.



## CHAPTER THIRTY-TWO: ONE OF THE OTHERS

MONDAY, AUGUST 27, 1988 - THE BURROW, OTTERY ST. CATCHPOLE, DEVON, U.K.

"Well that sucked," Harry said as he got back to his feet after falling face first onto a dirt road. It was the second time he had side-along apparated, the first being when Sirius had brought them to Black Manor, and once again he had landed on his face. He was not the only one as Hermione and Clarice had also landed less than gracefully to say the least.

"Give me shifting any day," Clarice said.

"It gets easier," Remus said. "Just a question of anticipating the landing is all."

"Which is something you don't have to do when shifting," Hermione said as she dusted herself off.

"That and you don't feel a thing," Harry added. At least he now knew what apparition felt like and to be honest he did not like it one bit. He was so not looking forward to apparition lessons next summer.

"What in the world is that?" Hermione asked pointing.

Harry looked where she was pointing and saw the strangest building he had ever seen before. He guessed it was a house of some sort, placed in the middle of gardens in an isolated spot in the countryside. But it looked almost like a tower. It was at least five stories tall and looked like whoever had built it was mad. There was not a straight line anywhere, excluding the windows and one door he would see and Harry was certain it should have fallen over ages ago. There was no way a wooden building like that could remain standing. Still, it had a charm to it - or perhaps many on it, Harry thought.

"That is the Burrow," Remus said.

"The what?" Harry asked.



“The Burrow. It’s what the Weasleys call their homestead.

“Why would anyone name a house after a donkey?” Clarice asked.

“Not B-U-R-R-O,” Remus replied, “B-U-R-R-O-W.”

“Donkey makes more sense,” Harry quipped.

“It certainly bears no resemblance to a hole in the ground,” Hermione added.

Minerva had set this day up, but could not make it as she was busy getting ready for the next school term at Hogwarts which would start on Saturday. The Weasley children were known as experts at flying brooms and this would be the first lesson for Harry, Hermione and Clarice.

Bill Weasley was the oldest. He had played Chaser for his House team up through last year but was about to begin his final year and had given it up. He wanted to become a Curse Breaker and that required Outstanding N.E.W.T.s in six subjects, that and he had learned he was to be Head Boy. Much as he loved the game, he knew it was Quidditch or Curse Breaking. Charlie Weasley was about to start his Fifth Year. He was the Seeker on the same team and had been since Second Year. He had recently been named as Team Captain which meant he was supposed to train his players and that included improving their flying skills. Percy was said to be no slouch on a broom either. But neither was he the Quidditch fanatic like his other brothers. Over the last weekend, Fred and George had told Harry and the others that Perfect Percy had spent the summer planning to put his older brothers to shame this year as the prank God of Hogwarts and had not been out on a broom much at all. Fred and George claimed that they were no slouches either and planned to go out for the House Team their Second Year as Beaters. They knew the two veteran beaters would finish at the end of their First Year, which was a year away.

Ron was said to be okay, but annoying. This did not surprise Harry and the others for that was their impression of the youngest Weasley boy. Ginny, according to the twins, was a natural. Only they knew she



had even sat a broom before. She had been sneaking out for flying for about a year now when no one seemed to be paying attention to her. The twins had caught her, and said nothing to their Mum about it. Ginny was too good to risk getting grounded. Apparently Mother Weasley considered broom riding in general un-lady like and Ickleronniekins would have a fit if he ever had to play with a girl. The twins thought this day would be a great prank on Ron as he would have no choice if he wanted to fly but to play with Girls and the twins were going to reveal their “secret” weapon (Ginny) to the older Weasleys. She could fly rings around Ron and he was in serious need of an attitude adjustment in their opinion.

While Remus and the children were flying, Sirius was off to locate the Lovegood home. There were two reasons for this. First was the fact that he was an animagus. His form was a large, black dog so he could move about the countryside without raising suspicion - Muggle or Magical. Second, while he had been exonerated for what had landed him in Azkaban, there were many who still did not trust him. Apparently Molly Weasley, the matriarch of the Weasley family, was one who was still uncertain. After all, Dumbledore himself had said that the evidence was incontrovertible.

Remus had brought the children's Comet 260's as well as an older model Cleansweep for himself as he would be flying too. Sirius had played Quidditch at school. He had been a Beater on the same team as Harry and Clarice's dad, who had played Chaser. It was generally known that the most daring flyers became Seekers. Chaser required skill and teamwork. Beater was about brute force and a degree of recklessness, hence the reason why Sirius was not teaching the kids how to fly. Both Remus and Minerva shuddered to think what Sirius might encourage the kids to do.

They approached the odd looking house with brooms on their shoulders and could smell the cooking coming from the kitchen. The door into the kitchen stood partly open. It seemed to be split into two parts. The upper part was wide open while the lower was closed. They could hear some kind of argument in progress.

“But MUM,” a voice whined, “Ginny's a girl! You said so yourself, she can't play!”



"I changed my mind, Ronald. Your brothers think she's good..."

"They're stupid! She's a GIRL! She's all icky and stuff!!"

"And two of our guests are girls too, and they are going to be on the pitch today," the woman's voice continued.

"BUT MUM! IT'LL RUIN EVERYTHING!! You can't let girls play on our Pitch! YOU CAN'T!!"

"No one said you had to go flying today, Ronald Weasley."

"BUT MUM!!!"

"Enough. Ginny flies as do the others. You don't like it, you don't have to fly today!"

"BUT THERE'S NOTHING TO DO! YOU CAN'T LET THEM PLAY. I WON'T ALLOW IT!!!"

"RONALD WEASLEY! THAT'S IT!! LEAVE YOUR BROOM HERE AND GO TO YOUR ROOM!!!"

"WHAT?"

"YOU HEARD ME! GO TO YOUR ROOM ... NOW!!"

The noise, while still loud faded and seemed to rise about their heads. Harry and the others saw Fred, George and Ginny quietly open the kitchen door and step out followed by two older boys.

"Hey Mr. Lupin," the oldest said.

"Bill," Remus replied. "Er..."

"Best we head off to the pitch," Bill said. "Mum's gonna be a while."

"How do you know?"



"She put the lunch cooking under a stasis charm," Fred or George said.

"Always bad news. Best thing to do then is run," the other twin said.

"Wh-why?" Harry asked in a small voice paling. He didn't like this Ron kid much, but no one deserved what he had been through.

"It's okay, Harry," Hermione said sensing Harry's past was not all gone yet, "she's not gonna hurt you."

Bill picked up on that. "Not gonna hurt Ronny either," he said.

"Cept maybe his eardrums," one of the boys said.

"Second time in three days he set Mum off."

"Not even Fred and George are that stupid," Ginny said.

"Wh-what's going to happen to him?" Harry asked.

"She's gonna yell at him - a lot."

"And can she yell," Fred or George said. "The git should have run the moment she raised her voice."

"Mum told him last time..." the other began.

"One more icky girl comment..."

"She takes all his quidditch stuff..."

"And his broom..."

"And he cannot go outside except to de-gnome the garden until he learns to read."

"Looks like he'll have to learn to read," Ginny said with a smile.



“Looks like we won’t have to de-gnome the garden for a long time,” one of the twins said with a grin.

“How’m I supposed to concentrate with that ruckus?” a new boy said. He was clearly older than the twins, but younger than the older two boys.

“Gonna join us for some flying Perce?” the younger of the two oldest asked.

“Might as well, Charlie. Can’t focus on some of my pranks with that noise. Who’s this lot?”

“You know Mr. Lupin, Perce,” Bill said.

“Sorry.”

“This is Hermione Granger,” Remus began. “And these two are Harry and his younger sister Clarice.”

“Erm, Granger too?”

“Harry Potter and Clarice Jameson,” Ginny said. “Their real parents died in the war and they lived in different house ‘til recently.”

“Oh. How come we’ve never met them before?”

“They live in London,” Ginny said.

“Explains why they’re here to fly, you prat,” Fred said.

“Can’t bloody well do that in London,” George added.

“Sorry,” Percy said meekly. “Just annoyed at ickleronniekins.”

“Who isn’t,” Ginny chuckled.

“Right,” Bill said. “Pitch and flying! Let’s go!”

“Pitch?” Harry asked.



"We got a regulation sized Quidditch pitch hidden in our woods," George said. "Muggles can't find it or see it."

"It's brilliant," Ginny added. "Come on!"

---

The "Pitch" was a clearing in a thick wood accessed by well used dirt path. It was an oval shaped clearing, two hundred meters in length and about seventy-five in width. Near either end was a pole with a vertical hoop on top. These were the goals Harry and the others were told.

"Right Gin," Charlie said. "Show me what you got!"

Little Ginny practically squealed! She mounted her broom (an old model Cleansweep) and fairly leapt into the air and began soaring around the pitch at what Hermione thought was a reckless speed. It was the first time Harry, Hermione or Clarice had seen a flying broom and it was impressive. Apparently Ginny was doing well because Charlie was impressed. Charlie pulled a red ball from a bag he had carried into the wood.

"Quaffle Gin!" he called out.

The little girl seemed to turn abruptly and began barreling towards her brother. As she neared, Charlie threw the ball into the air and she caught it with some difficulty but without falling. She sped off towards one of the hoops where Percy seemed to be waiting. She seemed to throw it at Percy and Percy caught it. He tossed it back to her and she caught it with greater ease. She raced out to mid pitch and began speeding towards Percy again. This time, she waited a little longer before throwing. The ball got by Percy who was trying to stop it, but bounced off the ring.

"Nice fake, Gin," Percy said.



"If sis develops a decent throwing arm, she'll make an awesome Chaser," Charlie observed.

Harry looked and saw George and Fred with what looked like stumpy Rounders bats bating a smaller ball back and forth between them as they moved down the pitch. Bill had now joined Ginny in passing the larger red ball and trying to throw it passed Percy.

"What's all this then?" Harry asked.

"Quidditch drills," Charlie said. "Bill and Ginny are playing Chaser. Their job is to try and throw that red ball through the hoop. Perce is playing keeper. His job is to keep that ball from going through the hoop. On a real pitch, there are actually three hoops for him to defend. Fred and George are batting a practice Bludger. In a real game, you hat those at the other team to either hit them or mess them up. Brilliant game!"

"Two different balls?" Harry asked.

"The red ball is a Quaffle. It's just a normal ball. No magic to it at all. You drop it, it falls to the ground and you might have to fly down and scoop it up. The Chasers try and throw it through the hoop. They do and they score ten points for their team.

"The Bludgers are actually charmed. They levitate all the time and move at a constant speed of twenty kilometers per hour. They will travel in a strait line until they hit the Pitch Wards on the sides or over the top of the pitch when they will reflect back in. Now, that assumes they aren't hit with a bat which can both change their direction and speed. They can get going wicked fast. Again, the Beaters both try and protect their team from the Bludgers and try and hit the other team.

"The last ball is this tiny thing," Charlie said holding a golden ball that was a little larger than a large chestnut. "This is the snitch and it's the most magical of all. It can fly in any direction at wicked high speeds and change direction real quick. The Seeker - that's me - spends the game looking for it and if he sees it, trying to catch it. The game continues until this is caught. Once caught, game over and the



Seeker's team gets 150 points. Usually, that wins the game, but not always."

"So you actually try and hit people when they're flying?" Hermione asked. "That's barbaric!"

Charlie shrugged. "Can be a rough game. Fred and George are using a practice bludger made out of rubber. Won't hurt you or unseat you if you're hit. Real ones are solid oak with an iron outer shell. Those can hurt you real bad. You want to play real Quidditch, you cannot be afraid of broken bones or the Hospital Wing. We all spend time there. As a Seeker, I'm a prime target. But good seekers rarely get hit. Then again, a good Seeker tries to fly his opposing seeker into the ground more often than not and that is hardly a safe thing to do. One small miscalculation and you're the one who flew yourself into the ground."

"Is this the only reason to fly?" Hermione asked.

"Nah. Many reasons. This is the most exciting thing to do on a broom. But there are loads who just fly along for fun or site seeing. As long as you know how to do it and do it without Muggles seeing you, it is probably the most comfortable and scenic way to travel magically. It's slow compared to Apparition and Portkeys, but not nearly as nauseating."

"Oh."

"If it make you feel any better, Hermione," Remus said, "I'm a decent flyer, but you wouldn't catch me in a Quidditch game."

"Okay," Hermione said feeling a little more confident.

"Now go have some fun, Charlie, while I teach these three the basics."

"Sure you don't want my help?"

"Maybe later."

"Okay. Have fun you lot," the boy said with a gentle smile.



---

---

Within half an hour, the three kids were flying. Harry and Clarice seemed to be naturals at it and were soon off joining the Quidditch game. True, they were not as good as the others, but they were not bad either. Hermione stuck to following Remus around the pitch. She did not mind a nice, gentle flight. Gentle turns, now reckless dives or climbs, certainly no looks or such, just a nice flight. Her broom responded to her touch with ease and, she was told, her model of broom would never get away from her. (Apparently, top notch Quidditch brooms could if the rider was not up to the task, usually with injurious results for said rider.)

She loved the flying bit without the horseplay and was amazed at how easy it was. But she lacked the reckless abandon of the others. Still, she had a wonderful time, especially when Remus performed a Disillusionment Charm on her and she flew off over the country side. Charlie was right. Even if she would not play that silly game, this was better than horseback riding! Remus was with her and they flew over the farms, fields and villages for miles before returning to the pitch a couple of hours later. For some reason, the countryside was much prettier from the air than the ground. It was, however, a good thing Remus was with her. She was certain she would never have found her way back to the pitch by herself. Then again, if she got lost she could always land and shift back to Potter House - or the pitch now that she knew about it.

It was a truly wonderful day for all three of them. They all agreed this flying thing was fun and could not wait to do it again. By the time they stopped for the day, Mrs. Weasley was done with Ron and in a pleasant mood. Remus talked with her about bringing the kids around once a week for some flying and she readily agreed.

"My Ron is so grounded," she said. "Might motivate him to learn to read if the kids come by to go flying. Will drive him spare."

"You sticking by your punishment?" Remus asked.



“Been trying to get that stubborn boy to read for ages. All the others were reading by age six, if not sooner. But not Ronald. Maybe this will finally motivate him. He’s smart enough, just refuses to see the point of it. I also told him he better learn now because if he doesn’t he won’t be going to Hogwarts.”

“You didn’t!”

“I am not about to send a Weasley there who is incapable of doing the work! He’s no mindless troll, but he sure acts like one - a point I made abundantly clear to him this morning - I hope.”

TUESDAY, AUGUST 28, 1988 - LONGBOTTOM MANOR NEAR COLNE, LANCASHIRE, U.K.

Clarice was thinking about this “task” ever since Sensei had proposed it. They were here to help a boy Harry’s age who in many ways was just like them. His parents, while alive, were not there for him nor could they be. Just like her own real and adoptive parents, the boy had lost that connection to family. He lived alone with his Grandmother and although there were Aunts and Uncles about, there were no cousins his age. Most were already young adults and starting families of their own.

His family thought him to be a Squib, which had a rather bad stigma in magical society. It meant, for all practical purposes, he was an outcast outside of his family. Raised in a Pureblood traditional magical home, he knew nothing of the Muggle World and would find it hard to fit in there at all. But not being magical himself - or so it was believed - he really did not fit in within the Wizarding World either. The poor boy was eight years old and had never had a friend his own age.

Clarice had just finished reading a book Hermione had recommended. It two was about a boy about the same age as Neville and Harry, maybe a little older. That boy was a Muggle, but it did not matter. The nature of personal relationships and emotions are the same everywhere. That boy lived in a huge, lonely manor. His father was alive, but was seldom around and not particularly affectionate when



he was. His mother had died years ago and most of his contact with the rest of the world was with servants.

The boy was believed to be sickly and treated as such. He seldom ever left his huge room. He was confined to a wheel chair when he was mobile at all. Enter a girl his own age. She was his cousin and had lived abroad her whole life until her parents died of illness and she was sent to live with her Uncle. She became the boy's friend and led him on adventures on the grounds that would have scandalized the father. In particular, the two snuck out (him in his wheel chair) and found a hidden and rundown garden. They were enthralled with it and spent the summer fixing it, throughout that time the boy learned he was not truly sickly. The garden was restored and with it the boy. With that, so was the father who had lost all hope following the death of the beloved wife, for whom he long ago had built the garden.

It was not exactly like *The Secret Garden*, Clarice thought, but there were parallels if what they had been told about Neville was true. They were here to rescue a boy from loneliness and self doubt, just as the heroine of that book had done. It was, in Clarice's opinion, a noble cause. Still, she and the others were nervous as they stood at the gates of Longbottom Manor hoping for admittance. They had sort of invited themselves over. It was under the guise of a social call by Remus and Sirius to Madam Augusta Longbottom, the boys paternal Aunt and now the Dowager of House Longbottom. The gates to Longbottom Manor soon opened and the five of them entered to begin yet another long walk up a tree lined drive.

---

The three children were introduced to Augusta Longbottom, Dowager and Regent of the House Longbottom. She seemed like she could make their Aunt Minnie seem like the giddy, giggling schoolgirl, but she also seemed to be in a wonderful mood. She dismissed the children after the formal introductions to visit with old friends and suggested they head out to the lake through a path and beyond the woods. She was sure her grandson was there as he was almost always there if he was not scouring the woods for interesting plants and such.



The three children walked along the path through the dense woods. Harry and Hermione were as almost always holding each other's hand while Clarice led the way for now. She usually walked on one side or the other and was not above holding hands with either of them on occasion. But the path was too narrow for three abreast. They soon passed beyond the wood and entered upon the banks of a large lake. Harry scanned for the boy in question and noted a lone figure seated beneath a spreading oak tree about a hundred or so yards distant. The figure seemed to be reading a book and had not noticed their arrival yet. Harry pointed the figure out to the others and they nodded. The three walked forward slowly.

"Hello," Clarice said softly as they got close hoping not to startle the boy. She was unsuccessful.

"Bloody hell!" the boy exclaimed. He was about their age with dark brown hair, matching eyes and a cherub like face still flushed with baby fat - the kind of face an annoying Aunt would love to pinch the cheeks as she cooed over the blushing lad.

"I'm Clarice," she said. "This is my big brother Harry - although he's barely a year older than me and our best friend Hermione - although she's Harry's best best friend and only my best friend, but there you go. You must be Neville."

"How'd you know that?" the boy asked.

"Logic," Hermione said. "This is a warded Manor and your Gran said you were out here by the lake."

"Oh. And - sorry - but why are you here?"

"My Godfather is paying his respects," Harry said. "Your Gran shooed us out to find you..."

"She want's me back now?"

"No. She wants us out here I guess."



“Oh.”

The three sat down on the ground.

“This is a lovely place,” Clarice observed. “We have a nice place in London, but nothing like this.”

“Er,” Neville said. “I suppose. London you say?”

The three nodded. “Right off Hyde Park,” Hermione said. “Quite nice. But we have no private lake. You like it here?”

“I suppose. I like this tree,” Neville said. “But you must have loads of friends there. I don’t have any here.”

“We could be your friends,” Harry said.

Neville nodded. “Wh-why would you want to be friends with me? I’m not much of a ...”

“Not much of a what?” Harry asked.

“Are you three,” Neville began, “are you three witches and wizard?”

“Yep,” Harry said.

“Course we didn’t know that until a few months ago,” Clarice added.

“You didn’t?”

“Nope.”

“You didn’t do magic until then?”

“Oh we did,” Hermione said. “But until a few months ago we didn’t know it was magic. You see the three of us were all raised in the Muggle world.”

“Muggle Borns?”



"No, Muggle raised. Long story."

"I like stories. Specially true ones."

"My real Mum and Dad were killed during the war," Hermione said. "Harry and Clarice's real Mum and Dad were too. We all got sent to live with Muggles. All our real parents were magical, but they died when we were very little. I was barely two when mine were killed. Harry and Clarice were much younger."

"I lost my parents too," Neville said. "Same time, I guess. I was just a baby."

"I'm sorry," Hermione said sympathetically.

"Oh, they're not dead," Neville said. "They're just not really alive. Might be worse, I don't know. Gran takes me to see them but they can't talk or - or know me or nothing."

"You have any friends?" Clarice asked after a long and awkward pause.

"No, not really," Neville replied. "For a long time my family thought I was a Squib. You know what that is?"

The three nodded.

"I was raised magical and never did magic accidental or what. Can't be a Muggle but wizards and such don't like Squibs much so ... Gran felt it was best not to let me get my hopes up there. Don't get me wrong - she's been wonderful to me. Still..."

"Still," Harry said softly in agreement. "Um ... you're not a Squib?"

"Nope. My Uncle Algie kept trying to make me do magic. He was right nasty about it in a nice way, I guess. Couple weeks ago he grabbed me and took me to the highest window in the Manor and told me he was going to chuck me out the window."

"Why would he do that?" Clarice asked in horror.



"Accidental magic," Hermione said. "Scare him witless and..."

"Worked for me," Harry added.

"Uncle Algie was always trying to prove I was a wizard," Neville said softly. "But he never really did anything truly terrifying to me. Okay, he did chuck me off the pier in Blackpool, but... Well that wasn't all that bad although the water was really cold and I couldn't swim. Anyway, as Uncle Algie dangled me out the window, my Great Aunt Enid walked in and scared him but good and he dropped me from five floors up."

"Goodness!" Hermione exclaimed.

"I bounced!" Neville said with more than a hint of pride. "And bounced and bounced! Would have been totally brilliant had I not gotten sick from it."

"Sick?"

"Lost my breakfast."

"Oh."

"Gran was so proud. She was so worried 'bout me until then. Still..."

"What?"

"I'm eight! Accidental magic happens much sooner so I must be a really pathetic wizard."

"Why?"

"You three must have done magic much younger."

"Can't say," Harry said. "My Muggle relatives never told me about magic or nothing. They just said I could never have friends 'cause I was a Freak."



"Are all Muggles like that?" Neville asked.

"No!" Hermione and Clarice answered in unison.

"We were also Muggle raised," Hermione said. "We didn't have any friends, but our Muggle parents loved or love us."

"Speak for yourself," Harry said. "My Aunt and Uncle hated me and wished I was dead. Nearly had their dream come true. According to the doctors and Healers I've seen, they nearly killed me."

"Why?" Neville asked.

"They hated magic, I guess," Harry replied.

"Are all Muggles that way?" Neville asked.

"No," Hermione said. "Most are not. Harry's Aunt and Uncle were mean and evil, but they were not normal."

"They thought they were," Harry said.

"THEY WERE NOT!" Hermione said. "My Mum and Dad adopted me. Their Muggles. Are they mean and evil?"

"No."

"They are wonderful people," Clarice added. "They took Harry and I in when we had no one and - wow! I lost my adoptive parents. My real parents were long dead. My Dad - the one I knew - got real sick and died almost two years ago. In May, my Mum was driving me to school when we were in a car crash. I was hurt bad and sent to Hospital. My adoptive mum died. I lost everything and everyone I knew and the Grangers took me in to be with Hermione and my brother Harry. It was a hard time for me. Still is at times. But between them and my brother and best friend, it was okay in the end. Sad to think that for me to find friends and have a real family, I had to lose the only family I knew and the only people who liked and loved me 'til then. But that's what happened."



“So you three haven’t been together long?” Neville asked.

“Last May,” Harry said, “my Uncle hurt me really bad. I was told by rights I should have died. They left me to die. But I somehow lived. Hermione and her family found me and sent me to hospital and I lived. Odd that, when you think of it.”

“Why?”

“Well, I lived in Surrey. Hermione and the Grangers lived in Essex. Dumb luck we would meet in a way - although I really don’t remember much before I woke up a week or so later.”

“I lived in London,” Clarice said. “By chance I was sent to the same hospital Harry was at when my Mum died. They found out that Harry and I were really brother and sister when they went through the papers or some such.”

“By then,” Hermione continued, “my folks had already agreed to take Harry in and they would not allow that to happen unless we agreed to take Clarice too.”

“So you never met before then?” Neville asked.

The three shook their heads.

“None of us had a friend before we met,” Clarice said.

“Really?”

“Really,” Harry said. “I wasn’t allowed to before I was really hurt and the Grangers took me in. Hermione and Clarice were scary smart - still are...”

“You’re not slouch,” Clarice said.

“I know. But I kept my head down then. Being scary smart meant a beating then.”

“And now?” Neville asked.



"It means I have these two to contend with for who is more scary smart," Harry chuckled.

"I'm not that smart," Neville moped.

"What makes you say that?" Clarice asked.

"Cause I don't do magic much."

"That has nothing to do with smarts," Hermione said. "That's just training and practice. Smarts is understanding the theory not the practice."

"I'd listen to her Neville," Harry said. "She really is scary smart."

"I suppose. I'm still not much of a wizard though, not for my age at least."

"What makes you say that?" Clarice asked.

"Had to be dropped out a window a couple weeks ago to show I was magical at all, that's what," Neville said in embarrassment.

"You want to be a wizard?" Harry asked. "A good one?"

Neville nodded.

"We can maybe help you there," Clarice said. "But only if you want to be our friend."

"I'd like that," Neville said.

"The friend part or magical part?" Clarice asked.

"Friends," Neville said. "Without friends, who cares?"

"We'd like to be your friends, Neville," Harry said honestly.

"You would?"



The three children nodded.

"I'd like that."

"Friends it is then," Harry announced.

"We can show you stuff," Hermione added.

"Wh-what kind of stuff?"

"How to do magic without an Uncle trying to toss you from high places," Harry chuckled.

"You can?"

"It's not all that hard," Harry said. "You be our friend and we'll show you. We can show you loads of stuff. And you can show us what you know and stuff." "I'd like that," Neville said. "I'd like to have you all as my friends."

"And you are," Clarice said. "You wanna see some cool stuff?"

"Sure?"

By the end of their visit, Neville had his first real friends.

---

Sensei had watched the whole day transpire and watched little Neville begin to come out of his shell. Harry and company got him doing some very basic controlled wandless magic within an hour or so and he showed them his secret garden of magical plants and such. Not even his Gran knew about it. He had never shown anyone his private garden before, but it was clear he was thrilled to do so.

It was quite impressive for an eight year old boy. Sensei was no longer surprised at how Neville seemed to be a natural in Herbology at school. The lad had a talent for it and was raising even a few of the



N.E.W.T. level plants at age eight without difficulty. The kid could even tell his new friends why they were important and what they were used for without hesitating or consulting an book.

But to Sensei's amusement, it was not all about magic and knowledge. The four children also played around and acted like children should. It was obvious from Neville's face that he had just had the day of his life. He had learned he was a decent wizard in terms of ability and actually knew more about some stuff than his new and smart friends. But he also learned how to have fun as they played non-magical games as well.

It was wonderful to see the formerly friendless boy have a day in the sun with his new friends and act like both the boy that he was and the wizard that he could be. Neville now had found friends. He had found friends for life.

The best moment, in Sensei's opinion, was later. The kids were again outside playing after a lunch in the Manor. It was obvious that Neville's Gran had seen something in her Grandson. She insisted that the relationship continue and Sirius and Remus promised that it would. Neville would be granted access through the Potter House wards and Harry. Hermione and Clarice would be granted similar access to Longbottom Manor.

Maybe the Neville of Sensei's time was now going to be different. This Neville was being encouraged and now had friends. The timid boy of the future that Sensei remembered might now be what he could have been much earlier.

What was more important was that this Neville seemed to have been found at the right time. He was no longer the Squib, but a promising young wizard in the eyes of his surviving family.

A/N:

1. Again sorry for the delay. This chapter gave me fits. Originally (See Ch. 24 A/N) this was supposed to be simple. Harry & Co. befriend Neville and Luna. Obviously one bit is missing. I realized I gave the kids brooms but no flying lessons (and I know that would irk you if I



left that bit out 'cause it did me.) Moreover, Harry & Co. will not meet Luna until after Hermione's B-day, and I can't skip that can I? It's her first real one with friends! So, add a chapter to my estimate.

2. This is NOT a bash Ron Weasley fic! He is eight years old right now and is probably the ONLY kid who truly is acting his age for the most part. He is - for now - a selfish little snot, but he will grow up in time. However, he will not be Harry's best mate... that's Hermione's role with Clarice a close second.



## CHAPTER THIRTY-THREE: THE AUTUMNAL BIRTHDAYS

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 18, 1988 - POTTER HOUSE, LONDON, U.K.

"Wake up, Hermione!" Clarice squealed at the girl in the bed across from hers.

"Wha..." the girl moaned.

"Wake up!"

"Why?" Hermione asked.

"It's your birthday, silly."

"Birthday?"

"September 19th! That's today!"

"I totally forgot that," Hermione said with a yawn. She crawled out of her bed and sat on it facing her "sister" Clarice. "With all that's happened and how busy we've been..."

She was not kidding for they had been busy practically since they had returned from Disney World weeks ago. True, they were not in school. But their days were full. Saturdays and Sundays were spent practicing magic with their large group of friends. Monday through Friday they were busy too. In the mornings they swam in the pool and practiced their martial arts. Two afternoons were spent away. One day a week they visited Neville, often coming home after dinner. The other day they went to the Weasleys to play and fly their brooms. The other three days they spent on Sensei's final project for this year.

They spend the afternoons at the Ministry for Magic and specifically in the Hall of Records. There were recorded all births, deaths, marriages and such dating back well over a thousand years to the days of Merlin. They were piecing together the lineages, both legal and magical, of seven families beginning with the lines of the founders: Godric Gryffindor, Salazar Slytherin, Helga Hufflepuff and



Rowen Ravenclaw. But they were also tracing the lines of House Potter, Black and Longbottom.

It was odd. There in that vast archive were all the records of every magical person in Britain, yet they were the only people there who were not employees of that Department. They were welcomed by the archivists and were even on friendly terms with all of them. Nobody ever bothered to visit this important resource, so the few who worked there loved the fact that three children thought what they did was important. With all the Pureblood stuff that they had been told about, one would think that the Hall of Records would be a very well used place, but it was not for some reason. Still, the three children were still trying to figure out what would be the easiest way to track the various family lines. Do you start at the distant ancestor and work towards the present or do you start from the present and work back? The kids only recently decided that for the founders they would work from the past forward but for the Blacks and Potters, as they were legal and magical heirs, they would work back.

Hermione thought about this as she got dressed for the day. It was almost like they were back at school in Japan they seemed so busy. But it was different too. Her parents were here with them, not just her Mum, as was Sirius. Remus was not around nearly as much as he had started his training with Office W. Minerva was usually around on Saturday or Sunday, but the rest of the time she had to be up at Hogwarts. Still, they were training hard, making friends and learning.

How her life had changed since her last birthday. When she turned eight, her party was just her, her Mum and Dad. There was no one else. Although she really wanted to have friends, for some reason Hermione had never made any at school. Oh there were children who were nice to her, but none she could really call friends. There really was no point in inviting them to her birthday. She had spent most of that school year the same as she spent the first two, alone. She did not think she minded. Kids left her alone and for that she was slightly grateful as she had seen how mean kids could be. Still, it would have been nice to have a friend.

That day her Daddy almost ran Harry over with the car had changed her life in so many ways it was impossible to believe she could have



ever been the girl she was before. She remembered those days sitting by Harry's hospital bed waiting and hoping he would wake up and dreading that day in a way. She was worried he might not want to be her friend. And yet, when they first truly met each other, they were best friends from that moment forward. Then Clarice came into her life as well. Harry was her best friend. Clarice was their little sister. The three were close and could tell each other anything, something Hermione had never really been able to do with her parents. There were just some things that were too hard to talk to with any adult. They had moved to this huge, magical house in the heart of London that had more rooms than there could ever be need for, yet even though she could have had her own room again, she and Clarice decided to remain roommates, just as they had been back in her old home and in Japan.

Japan! She learned about magic not far from where she stood brushing her teeth. She learned magic in Japan. She and her best friends made friends there and learned so much it was scary. Finding out she was adopted was not as bad as she would have thought, for in learning that truth she had also learned her "Aunt Minnie" was really her Great-grandmother. Her relationship with her mother, while never bad, was so much better now. Her adoptive mother had spent the time in Japan as their non-magical minder and was on the school medical staff as a dentist. Her mother had been very busy with that but she still saw far more of her than she ever had before. Only about a quarter of the students at the school stayed the full summer. Three quarters were only there for one of the five levels. That meant that her Mum had over 6000 patients over the four years and forty days.

Hermione was the biological daughter of David Puckle and Erin Ryan, both long dead. She knew this now. But to her she was and always would be the daughter of Rose and Robert Granger. In a way she was grateful for that because she really did not like the name Puckle. The time in Japan had really been a moment for her and her real Mum, the one who raised her. They had always been close, but that time brought them even closer. Hermione marveled at her Mum. Rose had three children at the school if you included Harry and Clarice. That time had made them a family. And yet as Rose was building her bonds with her three children, she was also watching over twenty-two others. By the time they returned from Japan, Harry



and Clarice were calling Rose Granger “Mum” unless they were upset at her, in which case she was Rose again. Hermione found the whole thing both amazing and kind of funny too.

She marveled at how much her life had changed and knew who to thank for it. Sensei and barely done anything, but it had already changed so much. In reality, all Sensei had done was delay Harry for a little while, which resulted in his collapsing in front of her and her parents. That one act set everything else in motion. Her becoming Harry’s first friend had allowed her to see Sensei and learn that she and Harry were magical. Harry being sent to the hospital in London brought Clarice into their lives. While Sensei and his Hermione eventually became friends, they never knew their Clarice at all. What really puzzled Hermione was learning that Ron Weasley had been their best friends in Sensei’s time. Hermione could not see that at all, certainly not right now. Maybe he grew up in that time by the time Sensei and his Hermione met him, but Hermione doubted that very much. That boy needed to grow up a lot if he ever hoped to have any real friends, Hermione thought. Every kid she knew about their age was not nearly as annoying.

After that fateful day that had brought Harry and Hermione together, all Sensei did was provide them with information. What they did with that information was entirely up to them. In addition to learning that they were magical, Sensei had also provided information that led to both the release and exoneration of Sirius Black. That was an even that had not occurred in the prior timeline. They had learned about the evil horcruxes years in advance. Harry had been freed of a vile soul fragment, even though he never was a horcrux and one of the foul things was already locked away in a vault in the house.

Sensei told them of some of the things from his life. Most of what he told them were events that were no longer possible. He told them of the first time he had met his Hermione and of some of the adventures they had together during their first few years at Hogwarts. Hermione knew he was not telling them everything yet, for while many things had changed, she knew some events would still come to pass at least to some extent and as these events could not be stopped completely and were years in the future, she could understand why Sensei was somewhat reticent at this time. After all, if one included the time they



would be spending at the Watanabe School, Hogwarts was about seventeen years away for them.

Yet another change, she thought. In the past timeline, Hermione would enter a struggle well before she was trained in the necessary magic. By accepting her status as a witch, she would abandon any possibility of furthering her non-magical education. This time around, she would be able to pursue both. She wondered what was in store for them this time. By the time they would be old enough for Hogwarts, they would have their Magical Masters and non-magical degrees as well. There was a reason why they might have to attend that school anyway. Sensei had certainly given them hints, not in the least of which was the fact that Harry and Hermione were Founders' Heirs. Still, it would be weird to say the least.

Still, all that was in a distant future. For now, they would learn, train and be kids for once. She knew they were already powerful for their ages, but that was entirely due to the training they received at school and continued since they returned. Magic was like muscles. If you exercise, you can achieve your fullest potential for any given age. Still, like muscle, as children their maximum potential was far below what it would be as an adult. But they would certainly be a surprise for any magical adult who assumed they were just kids. She remembered from Defense Class that they had to read Sun Tsu's The Art of War. Among the many lessons from that book were that one should never underestimate an opponent and always strive to let said opponent underestimate you.

Dressed and ready for the day, Hermione left the room and headed for the kitchens where they usually ate breakfast.

"HAPPY BIRTHDAY, HERMIONE!" several voices called out as she entered the kitchen. Hermione saw her mother, Harry, Clarice and Sirius all waiting for her to arrive.

"Daddy sends his love and all the best," Rose Granger said. "He had to head out to the Surgery."

Remus was in training and left even earlier than her father, Hermione knew.



"Thanks," she said with a smile as she took her seat next to Harry.

"Feel any older?" Harry asked.

Hermione rolled her eyes at the silly question. "No, not really."

"But you are. You're now officially the oldest across the board."

"I'm always the oldest across the board, Harry," Hermione said. "I just have a number to go with it now."

Harry leaned over and kissed her cheek getting the desired flush. "Eat up. Made this special for you, Hermione."

"Y-you did?"

Harry nodded. "I hope I out did myself for you."

"Th-thanks," she replied. She could not help herself. Harry had done something special for her. He often did, and usually got the same reaction from her. She hugged him, kissed him and thanked him profusely getting him to blush bright red and earning a comment from Sirius.

"Oi! Get a room, you two!"

"What's that mean?" Clarice asked. She knew what it meant in theory, but loved seeing the older man's reaction. He blushed as well.

"Er, when you're older," Sirius said.

"Says Mister Can't Help But Kiss Spohie All The Time," Clarice chided.

Sirius looked at Rose for help.

"Don't look at me," she said. "It is true and you have been a corrupting influence on the young ones," she added with a laugh.



“What do you mean?” Sirius asked in feigned innocence.

“Between you and Robert, you’ve turned three perfectly decent young people into budding pranksters!”

“I beg to differ, Rose,” Sirius said. “They were right pranksters before I came along. I merely hone their skills.”

“Fine. Now eat up before they get any ideas of how to continue to hone their skills!”

“Yes Ma’am,” Sirius said. Breakfast managed to proceed without a single prank much to the relief of Rose and to some extent Sirius.

It was shortly after breakfast that Hermione was told of that day’s plans. The “Weekend Warriors,” less those who had school, would be arriving by lunchtime for a birthday party. The “Weekend Warriors” was a name the kids had chosen for their weekend practice group. “Weekend,” because that was when they met and “Warriors” because it sounded cool. Hermione was somewhat surprised. She knew that there had probably been a lot of effort in arranging this birthday and somehow everyone had kept it a secret. She was also touched. She really had not expected all that much, having never had friends over for her real birthday before.

After an afternoon of fun and a dinner at a nice restaurant, the family would give Hermione their presents. Minerva would be there from Hogwarts, which Hermione considered an added treat. Sophie was going to be there as well, but this was no longer a real surprise and she and Sirius were seriously dating. Hermione was certain she spent at least a few nights a week nights here, but at her age had no idea what that meant. Still, the evidence was somewhat obvious as she would be there for dinner and again at breakfast the next morning. Hermione had overheard a bit of a conversation her parents had regarding this development each wondering when the two would get married. A wedding sounded like fun.

At around eleven, the first of the guests showed up. To both Hermione’s delight and surprise it was their newest friend Neville



Longbottom. He had arrived by Floo and brought a wrapped gift with him. He smiled when he saw Hermione and his other two friends.

"Happy Birthday, Hermione," he said as he handed her his gift. "This is for you."

"Thanks," Hermione said still somewhat surprised. "What is it?"

"Not telling," Neville replied.

"You'll just have to wait," Clarice added with a laugh. Hermione hated waiting to open presents. She gave the younger witch a false pout and placed the gift on a table in the Entry Parlor.

"H-how many are coming?" Neville asked nervously.

"Twenty," Harry answered.

"Really?" Hermione and Neville asked.

"Well, we invited twenty others," Harry said. "Might be more if the Greengrasses little sisters come too."

"You think they will?" Hermione asked.

Harry shrugged.

"If it was Harry's birthday, you can bet they would want to come," Clarice said. "Those two think Harry is super cool."

It was not long before the other guests arrived: Susan Bones, Terry Boot, Millie Bulstrode, Reggie Darcy, Aaron, Billy and Cynthia Evans, Daphne, Astoria, Renee and Jessie Greengrass, Andrew Kirke, Ernie McMillan, Megan Meeks, Padma and Parvati Patil, Roger Sluvey, Alicia Spinet, Lisa Turpin and Fred, George and Ginny Weasley. All were carrying a present for Hermione and were introduced to Neville. It was obvious that Neville had never been around so many children before, but he seemed to take it in stride. The kids pretty much divided up into two large groups. One was the boys and the other the girls, although Renee and Jessie Greengrass seemed to prefer to



hang out with Harry. There were exception. Harry and to Hermione's surprise Neville were two boys who did not seem to mind crossing the invisible barrier. She could understand Harry, as his best friends happened to be girls. She guessed it was the same for Neville, although Neville crossed the line with Harry.

Hermione remembered what Sensei had said about the young Neville in his timeline. Sensei had first met Neville at Hogwarts as they waited for the sorting, although they really were not introduced until afterwards. Neville was quite and shy most of the time. One might think he was out of place in Gryffindor, a House that favored bravery. But even at age eleven, Neville had moments that foreshadowed the wizard he would become in a few years time. Smoldering just beneath what appeared to be a shy and clumsy exterior there was indeed a lion. Sensei's Neville had stood toe to toe with the most vicious dark wizards before he was even sixteen. At seventeen, he had faced down Voldemort himself. An ounce of self-confidence was all the boy had needed to become the Lion of Gryffindor as he was known later in life.

Hermione knew a lot about Neville. He was practically an orphan as his parents were legally incompetent and stuck in St. Mungo's since he was a baby. He lived with a domineering grandmother. Deep down, she loved the boy, but she was also not an emotionally demonstrative person and had been concerned about his magical ability, all of which probably accounted for the boy's retiring nature.

The Neville Hermione was now watching had already departed from Sensei's Neville. He had told them about his parents the second day they met. Sensei's Neville never told, at least not until Sensei and his friends found out. Neville was immensely proud of his parents, but had kept their condition to himself. He did not want the pity of others for something he had no control over. The Neville Hermione knew was also proud of his parents, yet sad that they were the way they were. He told his new friends about them because they were orphans and thus would not make fun or take pity on his for his situation.

While Neville was still uncertain about how to act with all the other children, he was not hiding away neither. The magic he had found with their help over the past few weeks had made him more confident.



This, of course, gave him something to talk about with the others as he was learning many of the same skills they were from Harry, Hermione and Clarice. Hermione was happy to see their new friend was having a wonderful time.

Eventually, with lunch and cake in their bellies, it was finally time for presents. Most of the boys and a few of the girls had bought her books. Many were works of fiction, mostly magical and she was actually touched in a way by the book that Terry Boot had brought. It was a collection of magical fairy tales. Hermione had not even thought about such a possibility, so it was another way she could learn about her new world. Ginny's gift really surprised her. It was a collection of "Harry Potter: Boy Hero" books. Hermione had heard that Ginny had the full set and was amazed. The Weasleys, while not truly poor, were frugal people and did not buy things without reason.

"Ginny?" she asked. "This isn't your collection is it?"

"Erm - my brother Ron's to be exact," Ginny said blushing.

"You stole it?"

"Don't be silly," George said defending his "favorite sister."

"Only sister," Ginny shot back.

"Which is why you're my favorite," George added.

"Ickleronniekins had his own collection," Fred said.

"Which he cannot read," George added.

"So when he got grounded, he binned them."

"And Ginny un-binned them."

"Why?" Hermione asked.



"Cause they are funny," Ginny said. "The real Harry is so much cooler. The fake Harry is a bit - well - fake. Thought you might like a good laugh."

"Thanks," Hermione said with a smile.

The girls who did not give her books had noted her doll collection and collectively felt it was lacking. There was not a single witch among them, a glaring omission they seemed to have collectively decided to fix. She now had a collection of witch dolls depicting Wizarding attire from many of the same countries her non-magical dolls represented. Her version of her own "It's A Small World After All" - her favorite ride at Disney as it resembled her own collection - was now that much more complete.

"This is too much," she complained at one point. "I don't - you didn't have to ..."

"Your collection needed them," Daphne Greengrass said.

"But these are - well they cannot be - er - cheap," Hermione protested.

"They're not," Cynthia Evan added. "We all pitched in what we could and Harry provided the rest."

"Harry?"

"I thought they had a point," he shrugged. "They picked them out and I gave them what they needed to buy them."

"Daphne and I picked out the dolls from Renee and Jessie," Astoria added.

"Why Harry?" Hermione asked.

"Cause you're my best friend. It was Daphne's idea and I thought it was brilliant because anything that puts a smile on your face is worth its weight in Galleons."



Harry was promptly rewarded with a smile, a crushing hug from Hermione and a kiss on the cheek. "You really are a great friend," Hermione whispered to him as their friends tried to tease them about being boyfriend and girlfriend. Harry's gift would earn him an even bigger hug and kiss and of course more teasing. He bought her a charmed necklace. If she ever felt sad or lonely, it would remind her about the people who loved her. It was, in Hermione's opinion, the best birthday of her entire life.

WENDESDAY, SEPTEMBER 21, 1988 - THE ROOKERY, OTTERY ST. CATCHPOLE, DEVON, U.K.

A blonde haired girl with pale blue eyes stared at the stream before her. She had told her parents she was heading into the wood near their home to try and catch some Freshwater Plimpies. Odd that, she thought. While her Daddy claimed they existed, she had never even seen one. Nargles? Sure, on occasion. But never a Plimpie. Today was her eighth birthday and what she really was doing was finding a nice quiet place to cry.

Luna Lovegood was the only daughter of Xenophelous and Jasmine Lovegood. Her Daddy was a self proclaimed Naturalist and owner and editor of The Quibbler, an alternative paper or magazine that in addition to publishing his searches for mythical or even imagined magical creatures, was filled with stories that were probably fake. Luna knew this. Her Daddy never denied this. He was independently wealthy and never even charged a Knut for his work. He had, however, quite the loyal following of readers who enjoyed his take on things. Luna's Mum was the sole money maker in the family, not that they needed any. The Lovegoods could never earn a Knut and still get by quite nicely. Mum was an amateur yet talented spell crafter and held a Potions Masters. She would actually sell her discoveries from time to time, although truth be told for only a fraction of what they were truly worth.

It was Luna's eight birthday. For her second birthday in a row, her best friend was not there. She did not understand what had happened not quite two years ago. She and her neighbor - magically speaking as they lived three miles apart - had been friends as long as she could remember. Then one day, Ginny did not come over.



Something happened. Luna still did not know what. But Ginny never came over again and she was not allowed to go over to her friend's house like she used to do. While she loved her parents dearly, she missed having a friend. So here she was at her special place not having a birthday and crying for the friendship she had once had and that had been taken away from her for reasons no one could tell her. Luna sat there and cried for her second "Unhappy Birthday."

"Why are you sad?" a voice asked from behind Luna. She practically jumped hearing it. She had not heard anything. Luna turned around and through her tear blurred eyes saw three beings that looked a lot like children looking at her. Based upon the way they were dressed, Luna could only conclude that it was a boy and two girls. The boy had black hair and glasses. One of the girls had matching hair and the other's was brown and apparently very busy.

"Why are you sad?" the black haired girl asked.

Luna could only blink in reply, trying to get the tears out of her eyes.

"Why are you sad?" the girl asked again.

"It's your birthday," the boy stated. "Surely that's not a reason to be sad, Luna."

"Y-you ... you know my name?" Luna asked.

The three beings before her nodded.

Luna closed her eyes and muttered "Wrackspurts!" a few times.

"What are Wrackspurts?" a voice asked.

"Why are you sad, Luna?" the boy asked again.

"Are - are you fairies?" Luna asked.

"Nope," the boy said, "just kids like you."

"What are Wrackspurts?" one of the girls asked.



"Th-they ... Daddy says they're invisible magical fairies that confuse your mind," Luna said.

"We're not them," the boy said. "We're just kids."

"Then how did you know my name and stuff?"

"Magic," the boy replied.

"Oh. Are you magical?"

The three nodded.

"Why are you sad?" the dark haired girl asked.

"I have no friends," Luna finally admitted. "It's my birthday and I'm all alone."

"Have you ever had friends?"

"Once. Ginny was my friend. Something happened. I don't know what and she stopped being my friend."

"Ginny? Ginny Weasley?"

Luna nodded. "Y-you know her?"

The three nodded.

"You know why she stopped being my friend?"

The three shook their heads.

"Do you?" the dark haired girl asked.

Luna shook her head. She really had no idea why Ginny had stopped being her friend. "Why are you here?" Luna asked.



"We are here because we went for a walk," the bushy haired girl said. "We stopped because you're sad and look like you need friends."

"My only friend left me," Luna cried. "I don't need that again."

"We don't leave our friends," the boy said.

"That's so wrong," the dark haired girl added. "We would like to be your friend, if you like."

"I don't know," Luna said. "My last friend..."

"We never had friends," the bushy haired girl said. "Never! Not until recently. We somehow found each other and we are now friends and have found others as well. We know how you feel, Luna. We want to be your friends."

"Wh-why?"

"Because we know what kind of friend you can be," the boy said. "Because you deserve friends."

"You're not fairies?"

"No, Luna. We are not. We just like having friends."

"And," the bushy haired girl added, "you should have friends with you on your birthday."

"How - how did you know?"

"Magic," was once again the only response she received.

"I'm Harry," the boy said. "Until a few months ago I had no friends. I knew nothing about magic and stuff. I had no real family. Now I have a great friend and a sister and ..."

"I'm Hermione," the bushy haired girl continued. "Until I met Harry, I never had a friend. Now, he's my best friend in the whole world."



"I'm Clarice," the dark haired girl said. "I'm Harry's younger sister. We were separated when we were still babies and we finally met each other a few months ago. If you must know, until the three of us met, none of us ever had a real friend. Now we have each other, but others as well."

"Why didn't you have friends?" Luna asked.

"Don't know," Hermione said. "I think it was because I am smart and magical and until recently lived in the Muggle world. The kids I knew thought I was strange."

Clarice nodded. "Think it was the same for me," she said.

Luna looked at Harry with a questioning look.

"Clarice and I are brother and sister. When we were babies our Mum and Dad were killed by an evil wizard..."

"You-Know-Who?" Luna asked.

Harry nodded. "Clarice was adopted by a loving Muggle couple. I was sent to live with our Aunt and Uncle - Muggles - our Mum's sister and her husband. They knew about magic and hated it and were very mean to me because I was magical. They made sure I never had friends."

"What changed?" Luna asked.

"It's kind of a sad story," Harry warned.

"It's okay," Luna said. "Does it have a happy ending?"

Harry nodded. "I like to think so."

"Okay then."

"My Aunt did not like me at all," Harry said. "My Uncle hated me as did my Cousin Dudley. They were quite mean to me and hurt me because ... well, I don't really know why. One day when they were



away and I was really hurt, I feel down in the street. Turns out it was right in front of Hermione and the Granger's car."

"Who are the Grangers?" Luna asked.

"The Muggle couple who adopted me when I was a few days old," Hermione said. "My real parents were magical but too young to keep me."

"And you never met them?"

"I did, but I was too young to remember, Luna. They were killed in that war too."

"That's ..." Luna eyes swam with unshed tears.

"I woke up in hospital about a week later," Harry said. "Hermione was there when I did..."

"Not at first," Hermione started.

"The next day," Harry replied. "The nurses told me I had a special friend which I did not understand 'cause until then I never had any friends. But there she was, my special friend."

"My adoptive Daddy got sick and died a while ago," Clarice said. "It was a couple of weeks after Harry was hurt and sent to hospital that I woke up there as well. My adoptive Mum was driving me to school when we got in an accident. Mummy died right there. I was an orphan again, but I met my brother at the hospital and we became a family again."

"How?" Luna asked.

"The Grangers took us in," Harry said. "My Aunt and Uncle and Cousin died in a fire. I was an orphan again too. Hermione's folks took us in and we all learned we were magical and ... well, the three of us have been friends ever since."

"Are you sad?" Luna asked.



"About what?" Harry responded.

"Your Aunt and Uncle."

"Not really," Harry said. "They were not nice people at all. Not to me anyway. My Uncle was the worst, but still... The Grangers have been everything I wanted in adults and having Hermione and Clarice there as well has been brilliant."

"So the three of you are orphans?" Luna asked.

They nodded.

"And you've lived with Muggles this whole time?"

They nodded again.

"Yet you know about magic? You are magical?"

They nodded again.

"We only learned about magic a few months ago," Harry said.

"Do they know about magic too?"

Harry nodded. "They do. They knew about magic for a long time."

"But I thought Muggles didn't know."

"Most do not," Hermione said. "But many do. Far more than most witches and wizards would believe."

"And they don't hate us?" Luna asked.

"Some do," Harry replied. "Then again, there are witches and wizards who hate Muggles. Most Muggles who know about us - at least the ones that I have met other than my Aunt and Uncle - most do not hate us at all."



"Then why do we hide?"

"Some do hate us," Harry said. "They can be scary."

"Oh. That's a sad story. Where's the happy ending?"

"We three met," Harry said. "We became friends and now have other friends as well. That's a happy ending, don't you think?"

Luna nodded.

"Would you like to be our friend too?" Clarice asked.

Luna nodded. "I'd like that."

"Good."

"Why?"

"Cause we brought you some birthday presents," Clarice said. "Would seem a waste if you weren't our friend."

"P-presents?"

The three nodded.

"Are you sure you're not fairies?" Luna asked.

"Pretty sure," Harry replied. "I know I can't fly without a broom."

"Neither of them have wings," Hermione added.

"How do you know?" Luna asked. "I mean you'd have to see them naked as fairies can hide their wings."

Hermione blushed.

"Ohhh!" Luna giggled comprehending. "So you've seen..."



“Yes she has,” Harry said somewhat sharply. “Not something I planned. And no, I won’t strip down to prove it to you.”

“I wasn’t going to ask for that,” Luna said with a shy smile. “And you’ve seen them that way?”

“Hermione, once - by accident.”

“I see,” Luna said in a disbelieving voice. “I’m sure you’re scarred for life...”

“I wouldn’t say that...” Harry began.

“Perv!” Clarice exclaimed in jest.

Hermione was blushing furiously even though the incident in question happened four years ago in her time.

Luna just smiled for a moment at the obvious discomfort before changing the subject.

“How did you find me?” she asked. “Not even my parents can find me here.”

“Magic,” Harry said with a smirk.

“You keep saying that,” Luna said.

“Cause it’s true,” Harry replied. “We actually know some magic.”

“You do?”

Harry nodded.

“I mean,” Luna continued, “you mean you can do magic?”

Harry nodded.

“Really?”



Harry nodded again. "You want to see? We can show you. We can even show you how, but..."

"But what?" Luna asked eagerly.

"You have to be our friend," Harry said.

"I ..."

"We want you to have a good birthday, Luna," Clarice said. "You could use one."

"I ..."

"We want you to be our friend, Luna."

"Okay," she said after a long pause. "But will you leave me like Ginny did?"

"No Luna," Harry said.

"Not by our choice," Hermione added.

"And if we have to, we'll tell you first and tell you why," Clarice added.

"Why would you do that?" Luna asked.

"Cause as our friend, you would deserve to know," Harry said. "Although as our friend we would never do that to you, Luna. Do you want to be our friend?"

Luna nodded. "I'd like that."

"You want to show us where you live?" Hermione asked. "That way we can find you easy."

Luna nodded and stood up. She led the three through the woods and into a clearing. Before them stood a tall stone tower that Luna explained may once have been a watch towers used by the Normans



in a bygone age but was now her home. In front was a white picket fence and what looked like a herb garden.

“That’s my home,” Luna said. “Daddy calls it the Rookery ‘cause it looks like the Rook on a chess board.”

“It’s brilliant,” Harry remarked. “Okay, Luna. Let’s go there and have a Happy Birthday for you.”

“It already is,” Luna commented.

For Luna Lovegood it was the best birthday ever. She got some nice gifts from the three. None of them mattered nearly as much as finally having new friends.

A/N: I always saw the “Looney Lovegood” persona as a defense mechanism. She had suffered too much pain too early in life and threw it up to keep from being hurt again. In this fic, Harry & Co. got to her before Looney came into being. (She still believes in the possibility of make believe creatures, though.)



## CHAPTER THIRTY-FOUR: REFLECTIONS

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 31, 1988 - POTTER HOUSE, LONDON, U.K.

Throughout most of his former life, there were three days each year that had become a time for reflection for Sensei. One was October 31st, the date his parents were murdered and the date which set the whole thing in motion. Another was his birthday and he had quietly celebrated what would have been his 169th this past year. The final was today, New Year's Eve. While Sensei may have been an avatar, he had not lost interest in the world around him and admitted to himself he wondered just what sort of an impact his being here had on the people he wanted to help and the world at large. As such, he was an avid reader of the papers, although he often needed help to turn the pages. Thus he had stood witness to what he now considered surprise after surprise.

All Sensei had really done to change the time line was delay Harry's departure from the library some seven months real time. That was all he could truly take credit for. True, he had provided information that led to the arrest of Peter Pettigrew and had encourage Harry and the others to befriend Neville and Luna. But he could not make them do anything with that information. His one act was done solely because he wanted young Harry to have a better life than he had had. In that regard, it was a resounding success. This Harry was still the nice, polite and humble lad Sensei had been, but he was also loved, cared for and quite capable now of reciprocating such emotions, something it took Sensei years if not decades to achieve.

It was sheer luck Harry had fallen down in front of the Granger's car that day. Luck that brought Harry and Hermione together years before they would have met otherwise and both children had clearly benefited from their meeting and now deep friendship. Two lives had improved markedly within minutes. Luck had also brought Clarice into Harry's life, an event that never happened the last time. Sensei could not say for certain, but he doubted his being here led to the death of Clarice's adoptive parents. That probably had happened the last time around as well. Sensei wondered what kind of life the Clarice had



before. All he knew was how it ended. Still, something told him that this Clarice was better off than the girl from Sensei's timeline.

Sensei had discouraged any relationship with the Weasleys and had been ignored. The three Weasleys who were part of the children's circle of friends were in many ways very similar to the ones he had known. What was missing was Ginny's infatuation with Harry. It just was not there this time and probably never would be. True, she did like Harry. However, she was not obsessed with him. To be honest, she was far more interested in hanging out with Clarice. Clarice was a girl who was developing a keen interest in Quidditch, giving the two girls common ground. Fred and George were still Fred and George. Ron - well Ron was improving. He was still grounded but apparently was learning to read and according to Ginny might even be beginning to like it. The only reason that Sensei believed the Weasleys this time were different was because of the blood wards. Whatever had been part of a scheme to get Harry Potter the last time was only in its infancy when the wards reached full strength and Molly, who may have been the architect last time, now had no interest in one Harry Potter. She liked the boy. Sensei was pretty certain she had the last time too. She just didn't seem to have any ulterior motive this time.

Neville and Luna had been pleasant surprises. They were both the same children he remembered and yet very different. Luna was still very open minded and a free spirit, but she lacked the infinite sadness Sensei had remembered. This Luna was a fun girl that people enjoyed being with and she liked to make them laugh. Her eccentricities this time were drawing people to her because you never knew what she might say next and it was always either insightful or hilarious. The other Luna's personality had driven people away and led to her being a victim of bullies and means spirited children.

Luna and Ginny were friends again. Neither knew why they had not been. Ginny thought her mother had something to do with it. She remembered her mother saying that she could not play with Luna anymore. Her mother never told her why, just saying that a wise man told her it was the right thing to do. That was then, now two years ago. Now her mother could not remember why she had interfered. It made no sense to her at all.



While Neville was not the most confident young person in Harry's group of friends, he was not the shy and retiring boy he had been before. He and Luna were now regulars at Potter House and were part of the "Weekend Warriors." Neville was actually showing he was quite the capable young wizard and this had clearly helped him and his notion of self worth. The fact that his best friends knew about his parents seemed to help too. All four of his best friends - which included Luna - had visited Neville's parents with him on a few occasions.

His magical prowess had already earned him respect from his Gran. Within a couple of weeks of meeting his new friends, while the number of spell effects he could perform were limited, he was adept at the ones he knew and would not hesitate to use his skills at home. The first time he summoned something to him in his Gran's presence, she had asked about it and he told them his friends had taught him how to control and use his magic. He admitted there was still loads to learn for all of them, but he was trying to be the best he could be as a wizard. His Gran was so proud of the boy she had feared was a Squib, she built him a huge greenhouse. Neville's love for plants was the one constant between the two timelines.

It was so different the last time, Sensei thought. Ginny had married Harry for all the wrong reasons. They both did try to make it work, but they were both miserable almost from the beginning which had resulted in more pain and heartache for both of them. Ginny was one of the first casualties of Voldemort's third rise. She was not a target, just at the wrong place at the wrong time. Perhaps that was for the best, Sensei thought. Whatever problems Harry and Ginny had, no one could say that Ginny was not a wonderful mother to her children. All three died violently some years later and Sensei knew that would have destroyed Ginny had she lived. Hopefully this Ginny would find her true love and would be spared that life.

Sirius Black was no longer in prison. A free man, he still lived with the Grangers and acted as the kids minder. He did not mind at all. The fact was he had already applied for the position as a Magical Minder at the Watanabe School for the next summer. He was quite wealthy and his reconciliation with his Grandfather meant he would remain wealthy. One day he might want a job. His timeline was next fall at



the earliest. By then the kids would have taken their N.E.W.T.s and would be considered adults in the Wizarding World, but Sirius was in no hurry on that front. He was engaged now to Sophie Tompkins. They had not set a date as of yet, but it would probably be in the fall as well. Sophie had applied for a position as a Healer at the Watanabe School. The couple considered themselves a package deal in that regard. Sirius had commented he might one day seek permanent employment as a stay at home dad, but again, that was ages away. This Sirius Black was a much happier man than the one Sensei had known, another positive change.

With the reunification of the two Marauders, Remus Lupin had also seen a change in his life as well. In the last timeline, he had gone from menial job to menial job for years. Now he was an Agent with Office W in MI-5 in charge of the Greyback case. That and he recently started seeing a witch who worked in his MI-6 counterpart. Yet another life had improved from the last timeline.

That delay at the Library had inadvertently, yet directly changed so many lives, mostly for the better. It had been an object lesson in the law on unintended consequences. All Sensei really intended to do was help Harry. He could not at that time foresee a way to help any of the others so soon. Yet that had happened. But as surprising as the more direct effects of that day were, the indirect ones were astonishing to say the least. The obvious one was the death of the Dursleys. But that paled as compared to the indirect effect his actions had already wrought in wizarding Britain.

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 31, 1988 - HEADMASTER'S QUARTERS, HOGWARTS SCHOOL OF WITCHCRAFT AND WIZARDRY.

Good riddance, 1988, Albus Dumbledore thought as he sipped a brandy and willed the clock on the mantel to strike midnight. 1988 was without a doubt the worst year the man could remember in almost a century. About the only good thing to say about this year was that he had survived it somehow. But that was all.

The first crisis arose in May. It was about the guardianship of a boy named Harry Potter. Dumbledore recognized the name as one from a long list of children from that time who are or were Wards of the



Wizengamot, although beyond that he had no recollection of the boy. The news had broken that the boy had been murdered by his Muggle relatives with whom he had been sent to live after his real parents had been murdered in the war. No one remembered circumstances of the murder, after all that was a time when many were winding up dead. Death by Death Eater was the leading cause of death in magical Britain in 1981. Moreover the specifics of how the boy became an orphan were really unimportant. The Wizengamot formed of committee, conveniently when Albus was out of town, to investigate the circumstances of the boy's demise.

The investigation opened in early July with a witness from the Department of Mysteries, Hall of Records to present the boy's background. Harry James Potter, born July 31st, 1980, was the eldest child and only son of James Charles Potter and Lily Marie Potter nee Evans. James, then age twenty, was the Heir Apparent to the Ancient and Noble House of Potter, one of the most wealthy and highly respected of the Old Houses in Britain. His wife was a Muggleborn, but she was a highly accomplished witch in her own right. She finished Hogwarts first in her year and as Head Girl and had recently graduated third in her class from the Auror Academy when she became pregnant with her son. The archivists were able to verify that the boy was alive and had a sister, also alive, named Clarice Lillian Potter, born July 12th, 1981. They established that at the time of James and Lily Potter's death, Harry and Clarice had living relatives. On their father's side were Charles and Samantha Potter, their grandparents who passed away about two years ago and Sirius Orion Black, their godfather and second cousin. On their mother's side was Mike Evans their muggle half-uncle, an employee of the Muggle British Government married to a witch and father of six magical children and Petunia Dursley nee Evans, Lily Potter's older sister, a Muggle married to a Muggle.

The committee then moved to a Muggle site in London as there would be a series of witnesses who were Muggles. First were some teachers from a Muggle school who testified as to the boy's classroom performance. All were horrified to learn of the abuse he suffered. He did not exhibit the signs of an abused child. They were all contrite and all felt they had let the boy down. The boy had been a model student and a joy to teach if a bit quiet and was going to be



advanced a grade before the next school year. This was a child one could be proud of knowing, they all said.

The teachers were followed by a parade of Muggle Police, Doctors and Nurses and one Social Worker. They detailed the injuries the child had suffered over the years and who the child lived with. The testimony made many on the Committee physically ill. Albus remembered in particular the testimony of some Muggle woman named "Gail" who was a Nurse and an Officer in the London Metro Police and an expert in child abuse cases.

"Detective Sergeant Nelson?" the lead investigator asked.

"Gail's fine," the Muggle replied.

"Gail then. We've hear a lot of testimony regarding the abuse this boy had suffered. What is your role with the Metro Police?"

"I am a fully qualified pediatrics nurse. When I was working as such, I found I had a talent for talking to children who were victims of domestic violence and getting them to open up. Most do not do so ordinarily. They tend to blame themselves for what has happened to them. The Metro saw that I could get them to open up and hired me as an officer for abuse cases such as this."

"And you spoke with this boy?"

"Yes Sir. He was quite open about it in private. The abuse he suffered at the hands of his Uncle was ... horrible. Worst case I've been involved with. Pity the bastard had the gall to die in a house fire."

"And the Aunt?"

"Which one?"

"The one the boy lived with?"

"Abuse victim as well. Don't ask me why."

"Did she engage in such pugilistic tendencies with the boy?"



"The boy said she put on a show when her husband was around, but never really hit him. When the fat git was away, the woman would try and tend to the boy. But don't get me wrong, she made no real effort to safeguard the lad. She was a punching bag as well and was inclined to support her husband's predilections in regards to the lad if it meant she would avoid a beating."

"So she was abusive as well?"

"Impossible to tell. We have no idea what she might have been like without her husband. Everything I saw suggests she was a victim as well."

"You said which one when I asked about the Aunt. What did you mean?"

"The Uncle had a sister who was almost as bad as he was. She confessed to beating the boy. Idiot. Didn't even ask for a solicitor. Said the boy deserved it 'cause he was a malcontent, I believe she said. She confessed to setting her bulldog on the lad too. Again, she said he deserved it."

"Where is she now?"

"Prison. She was convicted of child abuse and cruelty to animals. She also confessed to drowning dogs that didn't measure up, suggesting her brother should have done the same with the boy in question. She's eligible for parole in about five years. That's assuming she lives that long."

"What do you mean?"

"Conviction for child abuse is almost a death sentence. The system won't kill them, but their fellow prisoners will given half a chance. I wouldn't be surprised if her cellmate smothered her in her sleep. Assuming said cellmate was not also a child abuser. The most violent of murderers hates a child abuser. Even amongst the worst of our criminals, crimes against children are unforgivable. Many child



abusers die in prison. Had this been a sexual abuse case, chances of the perp living to see the outside are about nil."

"What became of the boy?"

"He's with a foster family," Gail said. "Lovely couple. They have a wonderful adopted daughter who got on famously with the lad. Really helped him deal with things. He also is reunited with his younger sister."

"And how did that happen?"

"Coincidence, really. His sister was adopted as a baby. Can't say why they were separated. That should not have happened but..." she shrugged. "Her adoptive father passed away about two years ago. Cancer. While little Harry was in hospital, she and her Mum were in a car crash. Mum was killed. She was injured and sent to the same hospital. Their records were compared and we saw to it that the foster family took both in. Social Services has checked up on them occasionally and they are said to be doing quite well. Tragic situation, but a happy ending."

"How prevalent is this type of behavior - child abuse I mean."

"Rare. To the degree we are here talking about, maybe one case a year nationwide and most of those end in the child's death. Less than one case out of a million, really. Abuse enough for us to take notice, one case in several thousand of kids. Still. One case is one case to many. Every professional who works with kids is trained to look for signs of abuse. Even then, we can't spot them all. We do try 'though."

"What causes such abuse?"

"Mostly one of three things: drinking, drugs or the abuser was himself abused as a child."

"Socio-economic status?"



"No direct correlation," Gail answered. "It seems to be slightly more prevalent in the lower classes, then again so is drug and alcohol abuse."

"And Mr. Dursley?"

"Upper middle class. He was an executive in a fairly successful manufacturing concern. Made a decent living by any standard but not rich. No history or drug or alcohol dependency."

"So what caused him to do this?"

"He was a bully as a child. Aside from that, I have no idea. Again, there is no true profile - no one size fits all of abuser."

"Anything else unusual about this case?"

"Many things. The kid has no record at all before primary school. He had no NHS card before then. No medical records or shot records at all. It was as if he had dropped off on their doorstep and they ignored their duty."

"How so?"

"Even if that is what had happened, under the law they had to report the change of custody to Child Welfare. Never did. The first time he really turned up on radar it was almost too late."

"What would have happened?"

"If they wanted custody of the child, they would have to go through an evaluation process. They would have had a series of interviews and tests. There would have been inspections of their home life even before the child was placed."

"Inspections?"

"They visit the home, look around, ask questions. They go in assuming the worst."



"The worst?"

"That the couple will be - er - ill prepared or ill willed in regards to the child. Any evidence that they might be and the deal is off."

"They had a son, you know."

"Not relevant," Gail said. "They could have been abusing him too. Having your own child is not a factor in the evaluation. True, it makes an evaluation easier as the people tasked with it would be looking for signs of abuse or neglect. Easier to spot if there's already a vic."

"Even after placement, there would be periodic inspections to check on the child. That never happened here."

"He has been placed since, right?"

"He has."

"And that family?"

"Couldn't have kids of their own. Mother was injured as a teen and lost her ability to bare children. They signed up to adopt and were fully vetted. Social Services has checked on the girl frequently. They are wonderful parents. Main reason why he and his sister were placed with them so quick. I can tell you, Social Services would love to have more parents like those two to place children."

"Frequently?"

Gail nodded. "Least three times a year."

"Even though they've adopted?"

"They were also on the list for further adoptions. So they were constantly vetted."

"Did they adopt these two?"



“No. There are, I am told, legal issues of inheritances involved. They are foster parents. But the boy and girl are thriving under their care and Social Services sees no reason to place the children anywhere else. It’s a good match, it seems.”

“Thank you, Detective Sergeant.”

Dumbledore did not understand the importance of Detective Sergeant Gail Nelson’s testimony at the time. The next day, the Committee reconvened in the Ministry for Magic, but the Muggle testimony had dominated the press. The papers were full of editorials and letters to the Editor crying out why? Where was the wizarding world when one of their children was being abused? There were Purebloods calling for open warfare on the Muggles, but most the wizarding world was now asking whether they cared for their children as much as the Muggles did? Where was their social services for this boy? How many other young witches and wizards were victims of such abuse? In a rare moment of total hubris, Dumbledore never saw the next hammer before it fell. The next day, he - the Chief Warlock of the Wizengamot - was called to testify!

“So,” the Lead Investigator asked, “as Chief Warlock, what is your relationship with underage Muggleborn children and magical orphans?”

“As to Muggleborns in general, I am their magical guardian at law,” Dumbledore said. “They are wards of the Wizengamot. As to magical orphans, it depends. If their parents failed to designate a magical guardian, I can assume that role - otherwise it passes to their next of magical kin.”

“So a Muggle could never serve as magical guardian?”

“The law does not recognize that right,” Dumbledore said. “I tend to defer to their Muggle guardian, though.”

“And what about children such as the boy at issue?”



"If they do not have a designated Magical Guardian or a close magical relative who is of age, able and will to serve as such, that duty falls to me."

"Did he and his sister have a designated magical guardian?"

"As I recall the Will was sealed. They may have, but the Will was sealed."

"Why?"

Dumbledore explained that during the last War it was not an unusual practice to seal a Will if the Testator had been murdered. Early in the War, Voldemort and his followers murdered wealthy witches and wizards to gain access to their wealth and fund their cause. A law was enacted that would Seal the Will and without distribution until the youngest probable beneficiary came of age. If there were no children, the Will remained sealed until such time as the last possible beneficiary then alive had passed away. This law had the desired effect as the murder for inheritance stopped.

"And in sealing the Will, we cannot know who the potential Magical Guardians are?"

"That too was part of the plan," Dumbledore said. "Most of those children would either be sent to live with a magical relative or became Wards of the Wizengamot. This was to deprive the Death Eaters of possible future recruits."

"Did the Potter children have any living relatives at the time?"

"Yes," Dumbledore said. "As I recall, Sirius Black, his grandparents the Lord and Lady Black and his mother."

"Weren't Lord and Lady Potter alive as well?"

"I believe you established that, but that is not my personal recollection. I was unaware of their status at the time."

"And made no effort to find out?"



“Not that I recall.”

“So, Potters aside, there was the Blacks. Why did you assume guardianship?”

“The Blacks were too close to the Death Eaters. Sirius was believed to be one. His younger brother was one. His mother was a major supporter.”

“And his grandparents?”

“Their allegiance was not known.”

“So you assumed Guardianship over the two infants?”

“I did.”

“Why were they split up? Why was the girl adopted by a Muggle couple and the boy sent to live with his Maternal Aunt?”

“I don’t specifically recall,” Dumbledore said.

“Have you had any contact with the girl?”

“Never. Someone else handled the adoption.”

“Who?”

“I believe it was Sirius Black. I may have assigned him the task to determine if he had turned.”

“How would you have known?”

“He would have killed the girl if he had.”

“Yet he didn’t.”

“A fact I only learned recently.”



“So, you set the girl up for murder? A two month old baby?”

“Exposing Death Eaters was for the Greater Good,” Dumbledore sighed.

“And what of the boy? Any contact with him?”

“Five minutes or so when I left him with his relatives.”

“That’s it?”

“That was all that was necessary.”

“Have you made any effort to check on either of their well being?”

“I had no idea what became of the girl,” Dumbledore said. “As for the boy, there was a neighbor who lived nearby who sent regular reports.”

“And what did she report?”

“I don’t recall. If something serious was happening, she would have flooded me.”

“Did you ever check up on the boy yourself?”

“I saw no reason to.”

“You were his guardian!”

“I’m also a busy man. There was no smoke. No reason for me to get involved in the life of the child more than I already was.”

“So you never suspected the abuse?”

“I never considered it a possibility. She was his Aunt. I cannot understand how she could have allowed that to happen.”

“I see.”



To say that the hearing had gone down hill from there was an understatement. Professor McGonagall followed Dumbledore and told of how she had spent a day observing the Dursleys and had told her boss in no uncertain terms that it was a bad placement to say the least. She admitted she was already a magical guardian over another child, one whom the Potter children now lived with and it was revealed she was very involved with that child's life from the outset. Even during the school year she managed to visit at least every other week. She now did that for all three.

"Do the Muggle parents know about magic?"

"They do and have since before I placed the girl with them?"

"Why did you place the girl?"

"The girl's natural parents were still in school. I knew the Muggle couple and had known them for a few years. They were unable to have children of their own and were already on the list for placement. I merely sped the process along."

"Had you any concern about them...?"

"I would never have placed the girl with them."

"Do the children know about magic?"

"Yes. They live in both worlds. All of their friends are magical."

Minerva was careful not to reveal too much, but her involvement as a guardian stood in stark contrast with her boss. That was the main reason she agreed to speak.

Mrs. Figg was also questioned. She was able to turn over some seventy letters she had written to Dumbledore over the years complaining about the physical condition of the boy. She was told that she must be imagining things and was dismissed out of hand by the Leader of the Light.



Dumbledore had hoped this inquiry would be limited to this one child. He harbored no ill will towards the boy. It was not the boy's fault he had lived such a life and at least to himself, Dumbledore knew that boy's fate was avoidable and he had failed him. Unfortunately, the investigation then looked into several score of other children or former children who are or were at one time Wards of the Wizengamot. If anything, Dumbledore took more interest in Harry Potter than any of the others. The only ones he could even recall were the ones who eventually entered Hogwarts, and not even all of them. It was soon clear that Dumbledore had done little more for any of his charges than sign some paperwork now and then.

A lesser person might have taken offense at Minerva's involvement. Dumbledore did not. While he had not known she was a magical guardian, it was clear she took that role to heart. In regards to the placement of the boy, she had not said anything he had not heard before from her. She was clearly an example of how to be a proper guardian to at risk children.

Dumbledore was never asked and he would never have admitted why he failed to act on behalf of his charges. His first guardianship had run its course long before he became Chief Warlock. He had taken a personal and active interest in that orphan's life. He had hoped that Tom Riddle would grow into the son he never had. Instead, his first effort at rearing a child had produced Lord Voldemort.

If his tenure as magical guardian had not been enough of a headache, the exoneration of Sirius Black was another nightmare. It did not go as bad for Dumbledore as the child welfare case, as the press called it, but he did not get favorable press on the Black matter either. Black was the only person sent to Azkaban without trial. Dumbledore had taken it as a matter of faith that Barty Crouch and the Auror's had incontrovertible evidence of Black's guilt and accepted that under such circumstances it was not necessary to waste the resources of the Ministry or the time of the Wizengamot on a trial. Besides, Voldemort was gone. Dumbledore felt that retribution was not in the interest of his Greater Good. This also explained why many Death Eaters never stood trial for their crimes.



Needless to say, Dumbledore was crucified in the Press. His Greater Good was now a term that was associated with child neglect, abuse and all forms of immoral behavior. The thought that a child should be made to suffer for this Greater Good was too horrible to contemplate.

The Black Case led to numerous other investigations and ultimately trials. Barty Crouch was found to have aided his son in escaping from Azkaban and while the notorious Death Eater was under a form of House Arrest, the nation was shocked that the man who had been in charge of Law Enforcement would do such a thing. His excuse that it was the wish of his dying wife did not earn any sympathy. Barty Crouch Jr. was back in Azkaban and sentenced to the Dememtor's Kiss - effectively a death sentence. The former head of DMLE was sent to the prison for a five year term.

Most of the Death Eaters who had avoided prison years ago were not so lucky this time around. Scores were finally tried and convicted of their crimes. The only one who managed to avoid a lengthy sentence was Lucius Malfoy. He had proven instrumental in identifying unknown Death Eaters and had done so in exchange for a four year sentence. Severus Snape had avoided prison altogether, but that was only because he had been tried before and acquitted based upon Dumbledore's testimony.

The fallout from these scandals vexed the once respected Leader of the Light. He had managed to keep his positions as Supreme Mugwump of the International Confederation of Wizards by calling in every favor he had. As Chief Warlock, he had been censured and stripped of his ability to act as a magical Guardian, but much to the consternation of his enemies, had not clearly violated the law such that he could be removed from office. He retained his position as Headmaster of Hogwarts in part because the investigations did not find any abuse of this position. Still, he was now politically a dead duck. It would take him years to repair the damage to his reputation from the last few months of scandals.

The Wizengamot had passed a bill he had strenuously objected about. No one was listening. The bill was called the Magical Child Welfare Reform Act. It established a new department in the Ministry for Magic tasked with ensuring the well being of every magical child in



Britain. A magical child without a magical guardian, including all Muggleborns, would be assigned one by the Department tasked with overseeing their well being. The department had the authority to remove abused children from their homes and place them with approved, caring magical families. Arthur Weasley was named head of this new department.

The clear winner of the scandals of '88 was the Minister for Magic. She had used the press and public outcry to clean house within the Ministry. By the end of the year, many senior Ministry officials were out on the street. She sacked them for everything from gross incompetence to outright corruption. In doing so, she eliminated virtually every real threat to her position as the Chief Executive.

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 31, 1988 - ROOKERY, OTTERY ST.  
CATCHPOLE, DEVON, U.K.

"Luna?" he asked.

"Yes Daddy?" the little girl replied.

"Are you okay?"

"I'm fine, Daddy. Just thinking."

"You sure? You look like the Wrackspurts have clouded your mind."

"Maybe just a bit, but I am thinking."

"About what, my Snow Flower?"

"My last birthday."

"And what about it?"

"Before my last birthday, I was sad, Daddy. I had no friends. Then Harry, Hermione and Clarice showed up for it and it was the best birthday I ever had. I now have loads of friends and am learning all kinds of new stuff. Did I tell you about the British Museum?"



“You did in deed, Luna. I think you liked that more than the moving picture shows.”

“Yeah. They have loads of magical stuff there and don’t even know it. And then there was the Tower of London and...”

“You like the Muggle stuff?”

“Some of it is brilliant, Daddy. It’s all interesting. I’m learning so much.”

“And what is this project you’re helping them with?”

“Oh that. Well Neville and I go with them on Thursdays to the Department of Mysteries...”

“Really? They let you in? Have you seen any heliopaths?”

“We don’t get in the super secret places, Daddy! We go to the Hall of records and look stuff up.”

“What kind of stuff?”

“Births, deaths, marriages and stuff.”

“Why?”

“Harry, Hermione and Clarice never knew they were magical. They’re trying to find out who their ancestors were.”

“And you?”

“I’m doing the same thing, when I am not helping them of course. It’s interesting. I’m learning lots of stuff. I only wish...”

“What My Dove?”

“They went to that school in Japan. You know? The one where they learned all that stuff they’re showing me?”



Her father nodded.

“Did you know they teach more there than at Hogwarts?”

“Really?”

Luna nodded. “If I wanted to, if I went there, I could be a spell crafter like Mummy in four years! They have a masters in some kind of Zoology - I think that’s the word...”

“It is.”

“I could get that as well. That way I could help you guys.”

“Really?”

“Yep! I got a catalog if you want to look. They also teach non-magical stuff. A couple of summers I could also be studying advanced Muggle things like - I don’t know... Did you know they teach journalism?”

“What’s that?”

“Newspapers and stuff. How to write for them. How to run them.”

“Really?”

“Yep! If I learned all that stuff, I could be helping you and Mummy by the time I’m thirteen!”

“Funny you should mention that, Dove.”

“What’s so funny about that?”

“Well, your Mum and I were talking. That school is a lot of money, but not too much for us so...”

“So?”

“We already sent out an application for you to attend next summer.”



Luna through herself into her father's arms. "Thank you Daddy!"

"But you must promise to study hard."

"Don't worry. I will."

"I have no doubt."

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 31, 1988 - LONGBOTTOM MANOR  
NEAR COLNE, LANCASHIRE, U.K.

"Neville? Where have you been?" Augusta Longbottom asked as her eight year old grandson entered the Manor seemingly covered in dirt.

"Greenhouse," Neville said.

"Doing what?"

"That plant Uncle Algie got me for Christmas. Still trying to figure it out," Neville replied.

"The one he brought back from Assyria?"

"That's the one," Neville said. "Mimbilus Mimbiletoma."

"And what's to figure out?"

"You have any idea how magical this plant is, Gran? I swear if I had enough of it I could ... it's amazing! Need to learn more potions though."

"Why is that?"

"This one plant could replace half of the plant based ingredients we use. At least that much! But I really need to be good at potions to find out for certain."

"And if you cut it all up?"



“I’ve already figured out how to grow more. I got about seven little ones growing while I try and figure out the bigger one.”

“You do?”

Neville nodded. “A small cutting of healthy root is all you need to start a new one. I figure in a few months I could have twenty or so growing. Not idea how long before their big enough to work with, but I don’t mind.”

“Best thing that ever happened to you,” Augusta commented.

“What’s that?”

“Harry and his friends.”

“Yeah. They’re great. I’ve learned so much.”

“You like learning?”

“All of it,” Neville said. “Even the Muggle stuff.”

“I’ve read that book you gave me,” Augusta said.

“Which one?”

“The one about that school in Japan.”

“Can I go?”

“I was thinking,” Augusta said. “It’s very expensive, but I think ... I’ve already applied for you for next summer.”

“Thanks Gran!” Neville replied with enthusiasm. “I’ll try really hard! I’ll do my best and better!”

“I know, Neville. But there is one thing I want you to do for me when you’re there.”

“What’s that?”



"They teach magic there we don't teach here. I want you to find out if they know magic that can help your parents."

"Harry already said he would ask, Gran," Neville admitted for the first time.

"I sure he did. But you know more about them and their condition than he does."

"I'll ask."

"Good."

"Thank's Gran."

"I may not have said this enough, Neville. But I am proud of you and I'm sure if your parent's were here with us, they would be proud of you too."

"Thanks."

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 31, 1988 - THE BURROW, OTTERY ST. CATCHPOLE, DEVON, U.K.

"You wanted to talk?" Molly Weasley asked her daughter.

Ginny nodded. "Why did you stop me from seeing my friend Luna?"

Molly sighed. "For some reason, I do not remember all of it. I don't know why I don't. I do remember Professor Dumbledore told me that you and Luna could not be friends. He said it was for the Greater Good."

"Yet now? Now you don't mind?"

"A lot has come out about his Greater Good, Ginny. A boy was tortured for years for his Greater Good. I no longer trust him. Not when it comes to children at least. You want friends, he can rot. Do you know he said more than just Luna?"



Ginny shook her head.

“He said you were not allowed any friends until Hogwarts.”

“But that’s ages away!”

“I know.”

“Why did you believe him?”

“Don’t know. Just did. But that was then and this is now. You want friends, I am not going to stop you.”

“Did he ever say why?”

Molly shook her head. “He might have. I don’t remember.”

“So you don’t think Luna is evil?”

“What makes you say that?”

“That’s what you told me when you said I couldn’t play with her any more!”

Molly started to cry. “Oh my Dear Baby! I - I don’t know why I said that! I didn’t mean to...”

“Mummy?”

“You’re my girl, Ginny. You deserve all kinds of friends and Luna is not evil.”

“But you said...”

“I listened to Dumbledore then.”

“Do I have to go to Hogwarts?”



Molly nodded. "I wish your Daddy and I could sent the lot of you to that other school. We can't afford it."

"Harry said they were trying to work on that," Ginny said. "Won't have it worked out this year, but he said there may be a way. If there is can I go?"

"I will think about it."

"Thanks Mum."

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 31, 1988 - POTTER HOUSE, LONDON, U.K.

Harry lay on his bed staring at the ceiling thinking about all that had happened in the last real year. A year ago he had slept on a slab of plywood in a cupboard under a stair. Now he lay in a huge bed in a room that he was sure was almost the size of his last house. A year ago, he would have been looking at the stairs overhead hoping someone would take him away. That had happened! He now had a family! A real one!

Sensei had made this all possible, Harry knew. But that was all Sensei had done. Possible is not reality. You make reality, one of his teachers in Japan had said. This was now his reality. He was a wizard. But far more important was that he now had friends and a family. Across the hall dwelt his best friend in the whole world, his first friend Hermione. Someday, he thought, when we are older maybe we can be more for each other? He really did not want to dwell on that bit. Still everyone thought so already. Clarice lived across the hall as well. His sister! His girls, his thoughts added. He now had two wonderful adults whom he saw as parents in the Grangers. Then there was Sirius, a mentor and friend and mischievous Uncle, even though he really was a cousin. Remus also lived here. He was more the kind teacher. While he was busy with his MI-5 stuff, he made it a point to show up for the weekends.

Harry, Hermione and Clarice still had not found their Common Form Animagus, but Harry knew something about his. It flew! He could not wait but knew it would take time before he could transform and far



more time to master his form. Still ... a year ago none of this was possible. Harry was happy, another thing not possible a year ago.

"Harry?" a voice called from the door.

Harry looked and saw Hermione standing there.

"Are you okay? You're not sick, are you?"

"No Hermione. Just thinking."

"Bout what?"

"How much my life changed this last year. How much better it is than even my dreams."

"I've been thinking that too," Hermione said with a blush.

"You have?"

Hermione nodded. "They're waiting," she said.

"For what?"

"For us to join them and ring in the new year!"

"Really?"

Hermione nodded. "Oh, and you'll have to kiss me," she added with a deep blush.

"Why?"

"It's a tradition and Mum says you'll have to."

"I don't mind," Harry said softly. "Do I have to kiss Clarice too?"

"She's your sister."

"That's what I mean. Cheek maybe, but ..eww!"



“You coming?”

“Yes,” Harry said. He walked over to Hermione and took her hand in his as she led him down to the main room where the others were waiting to ring in 1989...



## CHAPTER THIRTY-FIVE: THE MASTER MANIPULATOR

FRIDAY, MARCH 17th, 1989 - HEADMASTER'S QUARTERS, HOGWARTS SCHOOL OF WITCHCRAFT AND WIZARDRY.

Albus Dumbledore paced his office with but one name on his mind: Harry Potter. He was certain he had done this before maybe even countless times. Ever since that damned committee, he was certain he had paced this office ruminating over that name. What was so important about that boy? He knew something was. That is the only way to explain some of the things he believed he had done. Why would he set the kid up with abusive relations? Why would he have anything to do with the kid's placement at all? He swore after Riddle he would never take any interest in a child's life again unrelated to his role as Headmaster. Yet he did. Why?

Tom Riddle had been a mistake in more ways than one. It was a mistake that the lad was ever born. He was the son of a horribly inbred, pureblood witch and a wealthy Muggle. The witch's parents had been brother and sister, as had their parents before them and she had been expected to breed with her older brother. Before that union could occur, the brother and her brute of a father were shipped off to Azkaban. The brother died there only a few years ago. The father got out, but came home to an empty house and starved to death decades ago.

The witch had used a love potion to ensnare the handsome Muggle and became pregnant with his child. Somehow, the potion wore off and the Muggle left her destitute and alone in London. The witch sold everything she owned of value, including herself, to stay alive at least until her baby was born. She lived long enough to give birth to the child and name him. He grew up in a less than ideal orphanage in London. That was where Dumbledore first met the future Lord Voldemort.

At the time of their first meeting in the summer of 1936, Dumbledore had been on faculty at Hogwarts for almost fifty years and was the Deputy Headmaster. He taught transfiguration. By custom, the summer before each new year members of the faculty would be sent out to explain magic to prospective Muggleborn or Muggle raised



students. This job always fell to the junior members of the faculty, or at least it had. Minerva McGonagall actually liked that job for some reason. Dumbledore did not. He was not very good at dealing with the less accepting parents or guardians. Again, by custom, one of the perks of being Deputy Headmaster was not having to make those forays. But for some reason, Headmaster Dippet had assigned Dumbledore to that boy.

The boy intrigued Dumbledore. In many ways he saw a version of his younger self in the lad. He was smart, cunning, ambitious and had demonstrated unusual control of his magic for one so young. But something disturbed him as well. The boy was certainly a bully, a trait Dumbledore despised in others and seemed to have a cruel or sadistic side. The boy had potential, but that dark side had to be controlled. Dumbledore felt that if the boy felt trusted, he might not turn down a dark path. For that reason, and without telling Riddle, he petitioned to become the boy's guardian. He maintained his distance from the lad. A direct, hands on approach as it were was not Dumbledore's style. But he felt if the boy was shown trust, he would turn out okay. The boy never returned to the orphanage, choosing and being allowed to spend his summer holidays at Hogwarts. Tom was smart and well liked by faculty and staff alike. Perhaps had Dumbledore taken a more active role, Lord Voldemort might never have come to pass. But he didn't and thousands had now died as a result. Dumbledore swore he would never do that again.

And yet he did. Why had he gotten involved in Harry Potter's life? Moreover, his involvement was far more direct in many ways than it ever had been with Riddle. Why? There had to be a reason. He just could not remember what it was.

What could he remember?

He remembered that the boy was the son of James and Lily Potter, Hogwarts Class of 1978. They were both Aurors. Not long after the boy was born, his parents moved to Godric's Hollow, to a house Dumbledore owned. It was placed under a Fidelius Charm with their best friend Sirius Black as Secret Keeper. The Charm was not that surprising. At that time a lot of families were living under that Charm.



But why were the Potters at Godric's Hollow? Why in his house and not one of the many Potter properties? That made little sense.

The sealing of their will in and of itself was unremarkable given the times. But no one picked up on the timing. Dumbledore guessed it was sealed because Black was a likely beneficiary and a Death Eater. That's what he said during the investigation and what he believed. There was just one problem. The Will was sealed on his orders on October 31st, 1981, the very night the Potters were murdered. The little boy was placed with his Aunt a day later. Sirius did not have his encounter with Pettigrew until November 5th and was not sent off to prison until the 8th. The only way Dumbledore's guess held any water was if Dumbledore knew Sirius was a Death Eater before the murders occurred. Clearly he could not have known that as Black had recently been proven innocent. Dumbledore could not imagine believing Sirius might be guilty without an overt act and he could not recall one. This just did not add up at all.

And he knew this was not the first time he asked these questions and thought about Riddle and this Potter lad. He knew he had paced this office countless times before pondering these same thoughts. Yet he had no memory of those past ponderings at all. Did he leave any kind of record? He then remembered his pensieve, a magical device for storing either memories or copies of memories. As far as he could recall, he had not used it since before the last summer Holidays, but he knew that could not be the case.

---

DAMN! Dumbledore thought. He was inside his Pensieve, his unaltered memories. He remembered everything now, including the annoying fact that this was the seventy-second time since the beginning of the investigations back in June that he had reviewed these memories and he knew he had forgotten everything the moment he left the memories.

Too clever for your own good! Damn Blood Wards!



In January 1980, Phyllis Stemenor had informed Dumbledore of her intent to retire at the end of that academic year. The Professor taught Divination and while Dumbledore considered her a personal friend, if she was a seer, he was a Quidditch Hall of Famer, which he was not. If it had been up to Dumbledore, he would have let that subject go away. You either were a seer or were not. It could not be taught. If you had the talent, you had it period. Phyllis most certainly was not a Seer. She was an unrepentant Fortune Teller. While there was possibly true magic involved, it was more geared towards lightening the bank rolls of the customer than actually telling the future. As Phyllis had told her friend on more than one occasion, usually when she was in her cups, a fool and his money are soon parted.

Much as Dumbledore wanted that course to disappear, he had to at least appear to make an effort to find a replacement. That was how he found himself in May 1980 in a room above the Hogshead Tavern with a down and out witch who looked like the worst stereotype of a fortune teller named Sybil Trelawney. Phyllis knew she was a fraud. Sybil believed she was the real deal. Not without any reason. She was, after all, the grand daughter or great-grand daughter of a truly gifted seer. Out of courtesy, Dumbledore held the interview. The applicant seemed to be even more of a fraud than the woman she sought to replace and Dumbledore almost called the interview to an end. Then Sybil made The Prophecy.

As Dumbledore understood it, a boy would be born at the end of July who could defeat Voldemort. That boy would be the only one who could prevent the onset of a dark age. Unfortunately, to win the war, the boy had to die as well. He hire Sybil then and there, not because of her prowess as a Seer, but because he needed her sequestered lest the enemy learn the Prophecy. At the time, Dumbledore did not know that at least part of the Prophecy had been overheard by a young Death Eater - a Potions Master in training named Severus Snape.

At the time Dumbledore thought it would be easy. The boy is born who meets the criteria. Set the kid up. Get a muggle bomb and place it with him. Voldemort comes over, kills the boy and boom! Game over! The odds of two boys being born on the night of July 30th - 31st who fit the conditions of having parents who stood up to Tom three



times were astronomical to say the least. True, Lily Potter and Alice Longbottom were expecting and due around that time, but Lily's due date was three weeks after Alice's and neither was due at the end of July. Dumbledore was convinced this boy hero was yet to be conceived. Why do the deities have a sense of humor? Alice delivered late, Lily early. Neville Longbottom was born late in the evening of July 30th, 1980 and Harry Potter not two hours later early in the morning of July 31st, both on the last full night of the seventh month.

Dumbledore figured that Neville was the target. After all, Alice Longbottom was born Alice Abbott, a pureblood witch from an old family. But he was not a man to bet everything on a single roll of the dice. One of these boys was The One. But which one? Voldemort had to "Mark One" as and "Equal." Well as cold as Dumbledore could be, he was not about to let a baby die for nothing. Both families were placed under the Fidelius and Albus was content to wait until maybe years later when there was a reasonably chance that The One could survive his first encounter to be marked. Albus set the wards on both homes, each one owned by him as a further subterfuge. The enemy would expect the two scions of ancient bloodline to hide on their own land, not the lands of a minor house such as Dumbledore's.

When Albus set the wards over the new Potter house in August 1980, Sirius Black was the Secret Keeper. Apparently, about a year later and without Dumbledore's knowledge, Peter Pettigrew became the Secret Keeper. The list of people who knew where the Potters were was short. Aside from Black and Pettigrew, everyone else was either a natural occlumens or had a condition that made them immune from a mind attack. Minerva was the natural. Remus Lupin, being a werewolf was immune. And Rubeus Hagrid, being a half giant was also immune. Albus was not in on the secret. That was by his own request. The truth was more people knew about the Longbottoms and more of them could be forced into revealing the Secret Keeper than the Potters. The odds were in favor of an attack on the Longbottoms and, as Albus knew their secret, he watched their hiding place figuring that was where Voldemort would strike.

By then, Severus Snape was back in the fold. He told Albus that Voldemort was targeting the Potters first. He begged Albus to keep



Lily Potter safe. While it was clear that Severus could care less about Lily's husband, the Death Eater knew a young mother would rather die than let her son come to harm and begged Albus to keep those two safe. Albus assured his new spy that they were as safe as could be and only a traitor amongst the five who did know would be able to change that. To this day, Dumbledore regretted his decision not to erect a blood ward then and there. Then again, although he was sure there was a spy in the Order, he did not suspect any of the Potter friends.

When the switch of Secret Keepers was made, Peter Pettigrew was living mostly as his rat Animagus in a hole not far from the Burrow. Sirius was a friend of the Weasleys and was a frequent visitor and having his rat friend nearby meant he could check up on the rat frequently. No one would have believed Peter a Death Eater. The man was technically a Muggleborn! All of his grandparents were Muggles. Black's family was mostly dark and if not Death Eaters were open supporters. But Pettigrew? Then again, Severus was a Half Blood, technically not Death Eater material, yet he was inner circle. Obviously, Voldemort was not as concerned about blood lines as were most of his followers.

Within days of the switch, Voldemort attacked. The One had been marked in a manner which changed the details of Dumbledore's plans. However, the general plan remained unchanged.

Prior to the attack, Dumbledore could only guess at the meaning of the Prophecy. Such things were always vague until something happened to shine a light on the true meaning behind the words. Consequently, until one of the boys was marked and the nature of that mark known, both had to be prepared for the One's destiny. At that time, Dumbledore had no reason to believe the One had to die. Consequently, his plan was for each to remain hidden away for as long as possible, maybe even for decades. It was a calculated risk for Dumbledore knew better than most that the war was not going well at all. Unless something dramatically changed, he figured the Ministry would fall within a couple of years at best. Still, there was no point in exposing "The One" before they were ready and that was years into the future.



In the event of the Ministry falling, Dumbledore planned to take trusted members of the Order into hiding. In addition to being a nucleus for a counter-revolution at one point, each had skills and knowledge that would be useful to the two boys. He had checked them both not long after they were born and knew that with training they would grow into very powerful wizards, which was why their training had to be strictly controlled. If they were trained “normally,” with their growing powers came the inevitable temptation to dabble in the Dark Arts, an unacceptable prospect. It would not serve the Greater Good to replace one Dark Lord with another. Hence the boys would be trained by the Light for the Light. And Dumbledore planned to begin their training as Light Warriors early, not later than age eight.

The attack on the Potters changed everything. The One had been marked years before Dumbledore would have guessed. Longbottom was no longer an option. All his efforts could now be concentrated on Potter and because Voldemort had been destroyed, Dumbledore knew he had time.

Dumbledore was the first to arrive at the scene of the attack. There were only two bodies: James and Lily Potter. All that was left of Voldemort was his robes. Dumbledore immediately appreciated the basics of what this meant. He had always suspected Voldemort had fashioned a horcrux and based upon the man’s boastings, probably more than one. Dumbledore knew that while Voldemort could be defeated, so long as any of those vile things remained he could not be killed and could return. Returning would not be easy and could take years, even decades.

He examined the boy and noted the odd scar on his forehead and the tell tale signs that the killing curse had been cast upon him. He pondered how it was that this baby survived and could only conclude that the dead woman lying in front of the crib sacrificed her life for her son’s. He could not prove that was what had happened and knew he could never prove that was what allowed the boy to live, but it was the only theory that made sense.

He examined the scar, and with the results everything changed. He detected another soul fragment. Somehow Voldemort had accidentally made the boy into another horcrux. Before that realization,



Dumbledore was more than willing to train the boy into a powerful magical warrior, one who could stand toe to toe with Voldemort and have a decent chance of winning. The horcrux changed everything. Yes, Harry would have to be the one to kill Voldemort, but he would also have to die. From all Dumbledore's research, he knew that any method that would successfully destroy the horcrux would be fatal to Harry. Harry had to be trained by the Light, but not to such a point where he could win and live to tell the tale. As Dumbledore contemplated this change in plans, a second cry caught his attention. In the next room he found another baby, much younger than Harry. He had not known Lily had another child, but this presented another opportunity. In his original plans, Harry had to live long enough to have an heir. He was the last of his line. Neville had cousins who could assume the mantle of Lord Longbottom. Unless Harry had an heir, House Potter, one of the oldest and one that was the symbol of the Light, would die with him.

With a little sister, Dumbledore could hedge his bets. In the event that Harry died without issue, the little sister could carry on the Potter line through her children. It was for that reason he decided they should be separated. Harry would have a target on his back until Voldemort could be vanquished once and for all and maybe even beyond. If anyone knew he had a sister, she would be a target as well. The girl would not be told of her heritage unless Harry died without an heir. Until then, it was best for both of them that she grow up separately and ignorant of her importance. This last factor applied to both of them. Harry could not be placed with a magical family. Even the kindest of them would treat him like the hero he was and he could become just another arrogant aristocrat. Such arrogance would make his training as a martyr all but impossible. Until he was old enough to attend Hogwarts it was best that he remain ignorant of the magical world. Better yet, it was best if he were placed in an environment that would leave him yearning for acceptance and a sense of belonging when the time came. That, and the need for protections more powerful than the Fidelius Charm led Dumbledore to consider the Dursleys.

He had met Petunia and knew she hated magic. He knew she and Harry's mother had a falling out and was certain that while she would probably take care of the boy, she would never love him as a son.



Her blood connection would allow Dumbledore to erect a blood ward for the boy's protection, but it would be weak enough that various monitoring spells he could cast upon the boys would work which would allow Dumbledore to keep an eye on the boy from a great distance. It helped that a Squib named Arabella Figg, who was a member of his resistance organization, live a few doors down from Petunia.

Thus it was that when Sirius arrived, he was instructed to take Clarice and find her a home in the Muggle world. Sirius protested, but followed his orders. Dumbledore took Harry to Hogwarts for the night while McGonagall cased the Dursley residence. It was early in the morning of November 2nd, 1981 when Harry was left on the Dursley's doorstep with a note. Clarice had been left with Muggle Social Services the day before and was adopted by unknown Muggles days later. Phase one complete, the children were safe and separated and Harry was in an environment that would make him a blank slate for Dumbledore when he finally returned to the magical world. Dumbledore had ten years to figure out how he was going to fill that slate when the time came.

With the Potter will sealed, Dumbledore assumed the role as magical guardian as to both children. This would prevent anyone from interfering with his plans. Clarice would remain an unknown. She would be a back up plan for the continuation of the Potter line. Harry would famous but unseen. In the meantime, Dumbledore could arrange for Harry to eventually sire an heir. A wife and child were things worth fighting and dying for after all. He knew that the boy probably already had offers for betrothal and would receive countless more once this news broke. That would give Dumbledore many choices to find a match that would both produce an heir. He would accept an offer from a Pureblood family, preferably one loyal to him. In 1981, however, not one surviving member of the Order of the Phoenix had a daughter. The best options then were Nymphadora Tonks, who was a half blood about six years older than Harry; Susan Bones, an orphaned pureblood living with her Aunt; Hannah Abbott, a Pureblood from a Light family that had sat out the war as best they could; and Ginny Weasley, a newborn whose parents were supportive of the Order. His first task after sequestering the Potter children was to check on the betrothal offers. Oddly, the only one of



his preferred candidates to make an offer were the Weasleys. In time, he knew he would accept that offer.

Having decided on little Ginny Weasley, Dumbledore had begun working on the infant's mother Molly. To ensure an heir before Harry had to die, he needed Ginny pregnant early and, if she bore a daughter, often. Dumbledore wanted their first child to be born before Harry finished Hogwarts, preferably before he came of age at Seventeen. This meant Ginny needed to be pregnant with Harry's child at fifteen or sixteen. This meant the girl had to be groomed to be Harry's wife. That would take time and a lot of effort from her mother. One thing Dumbledore did not want to resort to was any kind of compulsion magics for either child. Dumbledore did not think Molly would be as hard a sell as she turned out to be.

Grooming was common practice among traditional Purebloods whose daughters were typically married off by arrangement. The process took years but if done properly, the girl would look upon her betrothed as her one and only true partner. As a young teen she would be encouraged to experiment and practice various techniques designed to please a man short of losing her virginity altogether. The goal was to create the perfect wife such that the marriage would be a stronger one. Dumbledore knew Molly knew about this as her marriage to Arthur had been arranged, although by the time they married they actually were in love with one another.

Molly wanted nothing to do with either arranging a marriage or grooming her daughter as she had been groomed. As to the former, Arthur had already offered the contract, but Molly knew that the prospective bride and groom could break the contract if they were not married before the older of them turned seventeen and she also knew that the only way for them to marry at a younger age was with the consent of all parents and magical guardians or if the girl became pregnant. She had no intention of turning her only daughter into a groomed spouse and would not consent to a marriage before Ginny was seventeen. She wanted her daughter to marry for love. Dumbledore was nothing if not persistent and persuasive. It took him over three years, but by the time Ginny was four, Molly was onboard.



At Dumbledore's suggestion, the normal bedtime stories and fairytales had been replaced with the Harry Potter Boy Hero stories that were all the rage. Shortly before Ginny's fifth birthday she was no longer allowed to see her friend Luna. Isolating the girl from outside friendships was one part of the grooming process as it was supposed to help her fixate and fantasize about her intended. Friends would be a distraction from the specially created fantasy world that was deemed needed. The girl would dream of her hero and when she re-entered the world it would be at Hogwarts and her dream would be there in reality.

Dumbledore's role in this part of his plan was to control Harry's social life. He would not actively interfere in casual romances, at least until it was time for Ginny to become his girlfriend, but he would interfere if anything at school got serious. Outside of school, Harry would be restricted to his Aunt's house or the Burrow. Thus he would spend days and even weeks in a house where the only girl his own age or thereabouts was Ginny Weasley.

The whole plan required that Harry arrive at Hogwarts at age eleven in a condition emotionally to look upon Dumbledore as a father figure and savior of sorts. He needed to be empty so that he could be filled, ignorant so that he could be taught and pliable so that he could be molded and set firmly on the path to fulfilling the prophecy. Dumbledore, in the mean time, would look for any way to avoid the death of the lad, but he believed it was a fool's hope. Harry was a horcrux. The vessel for the soul fragment had to be destroyed. Still, one never knew. There might be some magic out there that would spare the child that fate. Dumbledore would look for it, but would not wait to find it. Should and when Voldemort returned, his destruction took priority over Harry's well being. Harry's life was not worth the thousands or millions who could die in the next war. Better one life lost than an entire generation. This was the Greater Good after all.

The plan would have worked. It would have worked but for the Dursleys. Albus wanted a boy who was pliable. He did not want the arrogant pureblood scion the boy would or could have become had he been raised in the magical world. He did not want a determined and self-confident boy that was the product of a loving and supportive family. Harry was sent to his Aunt because the boy was to be starved



of affection. However, despite his 150 years, Albus was quite naïve. He was never a parent nor had he paid much attention to that discipline at all. He was an academic and lived in the world of theory and books, not the real world of relationships. Physical abuse of a child was a concept so foreign to him he could not even consider it as a possibility. He had dismissed Arabella Figg's letters about the abuse as delusional fantasies. She had been a primary school teacher and abhorred any form of corporal punishment on a child. Dumbledore assumed Harry had been nothing more than a victim of a common spank.

When the truth came out about Harry's former living situation during the investigation, Dumbledore had become physically ill. His goal was to avoid creating another Dark Lord, yet he knew from history the life he had sentenced the boy to live was the fast track to that eventuality. The need to regain control over the boy was immense, but he now lacked the ability. He had lost his guardianship. He knew he would not get that back in time. Molly Weasley had sent him a Howler following his testimony that basically told him he was *Persona Non Grata* at the Weasleys. The Weasley's had even gone so far as to rescind the betrothal contract. It was an unnecessary yet significant gesture. Once Dumbledore's status as magical guardian had been revoked, any and all unfulfilled contracts he had entered into on behalf of his Wards were null and void. This step by the Weasleys meant that even if he ever regained that status, Ginny was not available to him ever again, at least not as a match for Harry. Once a contract of such nature was rejected or rescinded, it could never be renewed with the same person, that person being the guardian and not the child. He had lost Arthur and Molly Weasley. Unless he had to communicate with them about a Hogwarts matter involving one of their children, his letters and floo access to the Burrow was denied. Her reaction was hardly atypical. He had been relegated to little more than the Headmaster. Even then, he was on probation.

He had lost ten months on his project for the boy. Merlin knows how much this might have cost the Greater Good. There was no way Dumbledore could undo a lot of what had happened. Those damnable Durlseys were now dead. The blood wards, however, were stronger than ever. That meant Harry and his sister were together again. He seemed to recall that now from the investigation, although



at the time he could not connect that boy with Harry Potter of the Prophecy. With those damn wards in place, Dumbledore knew that the moment he left this Pensieve, his memories of the Prophecy and how it was connected with Harry Potter would be wiped yet again. Seventy-two times thus far he had come in here looking for answers to nagging questions. Seventy-two times he had found them. And seventy-two times he had promptly forgotten them once he left.

What was infuriating was that he knew of only two ways for him or anyone else to retain their memories of Harry Potter. Oh they could be reminded of what they knew just as he was when he was in here, but as soon as one went on to something else, the memory would fade. No, there were only two ways to retain the memories. The first was if he gained the boy's trust. That was unlikely for several reasons. First off, Dumbledore would have forgotten that the boy was of any importance. He would have no reason to even meet the boy, much less to gain his trust. Then there was the fact that the whole wizarding world knew it was him who had placed Harry with the Dursleys. It was doubtful he would even be allowed contact outside of Hogwarts. He would permanently regain his memories of the boy the moment the lad arrived for sorting at Hogwarts. But that was over two years away. The plan he had for the boy would be in ruins by then. There had to be another way. Unfortunately, Dumbledore knew his memory would be wiped. Perhaps if he tried to remember something simple, something not directly related to what he had known about the lad. Perhaps then he could begin to solve this puzzle. He knew it would take time. It was, however, his only option and with Voldemort out there and the prospect of another bloody civil war looming, he had to do something or anything to minimize the damage and end Riddle's life once and for all.

Dumbledore left the pensieve, having forgotten whatever it was he was reviewing. Still, he remembered an idea and picked up a quill and piece of parchment.

Bring quill, ink and parchment into the Pensieve next time, he wrote and left the note beside the pensieve before leaving his office for the evening meal after which he was meeting with Hagrid and others down at the pub to celebrate St. Patrick's Day.



SATURDAY, MARCH 18th, 1989 - POTTER HOUSE, LONDON, U.K.

The “Weekend Warriors” were all present in the Ballroom. Harry stood before them. “On today’s agenda,” he began, “we are going to begin to learn shifting.”

A cheer went up.

“But before we begin,” Harry continued when they settled down, “there is something else. For centuries the Potters have run the Potter Foundation. It is a philanthropic and charitable organization...”

“What’s that?” a voice asked.

“Simply put, it makes tons of money and then give it all

away to people in need. Specifically, it funds magical education. Almost forty percent of the tuition that will send witches and wizards to the magical schools here in Britain this year came from Potter Foundation scholarships. Most families pay what they can and the foundation picks up most of the rest. There is another foundation that does the same thing, except it only funds Purebloods. All others are funded by my family’s Foundation. Seventy-five percent of the Muggleborns receive half or more of their tuition from this fund.

“I guess none of you lot really care about that stuff. But you should. You see, over the next few years, the Foundation is going to pay to send the lot of you to the Watanabe School in Japan for summer session.”

A huge cheer went up.

“Before you lot get too excited, I must tell you we cannot send all of you beginning this summer. The cost of that school is 25,000 galleons per person per summer. That’s 5,000 galleons per academic year...”

“Bloody hell! That’s a lot!” a voice called out.

“How much is Hogwarts?” another added.



“Or St. George’s?”

“St. George’s is a thousand,” Jason Evans, the oldest of the Evans children said. “Thousand per year.”

“Hogwarts is 3,000,” Dora Tonks added. “Then again, it is a boarding school.”

“Still that Japan school is wicked expensive,” Daphne Greengrass noted.

“Hence the reason we cannot send all of you beginning this year,” Harry said. “The Foundation has committed funds for three summers at the school for each student, with reserves for a fourth summer if you wish it. This summer three of you lot’s families are sending their children and we can send seven more.”

“And how do we pick the seven?” a voice asked.

“Age,” Harry said. “Oldest go first.”

Hermione stood up. “Will the following people please rise: Susan Bones, Colin Dunbar, Jason Evans, Amber Evans, Neville Longbottom, Luna Lovegood, Justin Parker, Trisha Powell, Ian Smith, and Dora Tonks.”

The kids stood.

“The Britain Class of 1989,” Hermione said.

“Now,” Harry said, “because you older kids are only now learning wandless magic, you will enter as Third Year Magicals. Yes, that means a few of you will take O.W.L.s again. But this is a chance to do better and take different electives. Professor McGonagall will be available to talk about the various Masters you can pursue and what O.W.L.s and N.E.W.T.s you need to pursue them. Mind you, aside from our three youngest in ‘89, the rest of you lot will return here next summer with your N.E.W.T.s in hand.”



“Magical studies aside,” Hermione continued, “you lot will be tested for your non-magical study levels. If you can read, write, add, subtract, multiply and divide, you will be level three, fifth year non-magical. Otherwise you’ll probably be level two. If you can do pre-algebra and have a basic understanding of sciences and history and such, you might pass for level four. But don’t worry. Whatever level you test into you will learn loads of stuff and will be at and beyond university when you’re done.”

“Wicked!” a voice said.

“Be seated,” Clarice said. And the Class of ‘89 sat down. “Over the next couple of months you will be receiving paperwork to get you there and back again. We will travel by Muggle means and that means we fly in a Muggle airplane to Tokyo. We get to school from there by magical means. Since we are ‘going Muggle,’ there will be passports and such for the lot of you. Don’t lose them! We leave here from Heathrow in London on June 28th. We get back on July 30th. We already booked the flights and will be seated together. Those of you who have wands can bring them, but you must pack them in your bags. All of you will get new wands in Kyoto.”

“Why?” Dora asked.

“One, it is part of the tuition. Two, they are unregistered here which means you can practice with them at home without getting a visit from the ministry.”

“Wicked!”

“Now for the rest of you,” Hermione said. “Will the following please stand: Regina Darcy, Aaron Evans, Michelle Evans, Andrew Kirke, Maggie Meeks, Robert Parker, Roger Sluvey, Alicia Spinet, Fred Weasley and George Weasley?”

The children rose.

“Assuming you still want to,” Hermione said, “you’re off to Japan with the rest of us the summer of 1990.”



“Wicked!” Fred and George said.

“And last but not least, our class of 1991,” Hermione continued. “Terry Boot, Millie Bullstrode, Billy Evans, Cynthia Evans, Astoria, Daphne and maybe Renee Greengrass, Ernie McMillan, Padma and Parvati Patil and Ginny Weasley.”

“And my brother Ron?” Ginny asked.

“It’s up to your Mum,” Harry said. “Right now, no.”

“Cool!” Millie said.

“We hope there may be others by then” Hermione finished.

“Right then, Shifiting!” Harry said.

Tonks listened intently. As it had been all year, whenever the trio introduced them to new magic, there was always a history lesson and Hermione usually gave it. It was far better than any history lesson at Hogwarts. Hermione’s “lessons” dealt with the development of magic, not boring goblin wars and such. Hermione explained why western Europe had forgotten magic and why much of the rest of the world had not. It all came down to the wand and the Greco-Roman myopic view of things that plagued magical and non-magical Europe for a thousand years or more. If the Greeks and Romans did not consider it, it was obviously not important.

Wandless magic was thousands of years old, dating back before even the dawn of writing. Every magical child could do it, yet the Western Europeans who practiced the Greco-Roman magics did not develop this talent. The wand was invented probably in Italy before the founding of Rome sometime between 1000 and 700 B.C.E. It spread through Italy and into Greece when the Greeks began trying to colonize the Italian peninsula and Sicily. It spread east into then Babylon and Persia and beyond with the armies of Alexander the Great and west and north with the Roman Legions. In the first century, it reached Britain. But while most of modern day Europe was part of either the Roman Empire or its allied States, parts were not. The



Gauls and many Germanic tribes fell to the wand and sword and adopted the wand for their magicals. They soon forgot the old ways.

But many cultures integrated the wand into the wandless ways. Scandinavia, for example, did not encounter the wand until the Vikings went about. Through the Vikings, the wand went east into Russia and the Ukraine. The Mongols brought the wand to China and through trade it landed in Japan. European explorers centuries later brought it to the rest of the world. It was the ancient Roman Empire that had given up on wandless magics. The Arabs and Persians had as well having been brought to the wand before the rise of Christianity and Islam. Wandless magic was considered in the West to be primitive. It was anything but that. True, it was the oldest form of magical expression, but it was as advanced as anything. Yet the prejudice of the Greco-Roman tradition favored the wand over all other magics.

Shifting was a wandless form of magic. If your magic was wand magic and you had no wandless skills, you could never learn to shift. That was the main reason why it had been forgotten and why it was not taught in Britain. It was considered primitive and unreliable because the Greeks and Romans did not do it. Apparition was the wand based counterpart of Shifting in most respects. Shifting was the oldest and in many ways easiest form of magical transport. But it was not known in the West because the Romans had invented Portkeys and Apparition, both being wand based magic.

Shifting had some advantages over the Greco-Roman modes of magical transport. First off it was not range limited. Harry, Hermione and Clarice could shift from London to Kyoto no problem and they had to prove it to themselves. Apparition had a maximum range of 900 kilometers over land if you were powerful enough. Over water, it was limited to no more than 100 kilometers. With a portkey, you could travel over land and water about 5,000 kilometers. Shifting was also instantaneous. You were here then you're there. No uncomfortable delays in transit while the Greco-Roman versions took at least a few second, and even more at maximum range and those were always uncomfortable ways to travel. Shifting was also unaffected by wards. You could theoretically shift into Hogwarts or Gringotts. Theoretically.



Shifting also had disadvantages. First off, you could not “Blind Shift.” With apparition and portkeys, you could travel to France even if you had never been there before. Shifting did not allow that option. You could only shift to a place you had been before or a place you could see prior to shifting. Harry could portkey to Hogwarts, but he had never been there so shifting was out of the question. His trips to the Burrow, Black Manor, Longbottom Manor and The Rookery were all initially by portkey or side-along apparition. It was only after this first trip that he and the others could shift there. There was no such thing as side-along shifting. You could not bring someone else with you. Finally, shifting was impossible if you were under too much physical, magical or emotional distress. This was why in a prolonged duel, the opponents stopped shifting altogether. They just could not do it any more. Apparition, on the other hand, while riskier was not so limited. You could blind apparate, side-along another and apparate under stress. True, there was the risk of injury, but in battle it was a better means to ingress and egress than shifting.

“And how to we do it?” Dora asked.

“Same way with all wandless forms,” Harry replied. “Think of what you want to do, touch your inner magic and command it to happen.”

Tonks shifted home that day. Within three weeks, shifting was the norm for all the “Weekend Warriors.”



## CHAPTER THIRTY-SIX: PROJECTS

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 19th, 1989 - POTTER HOUSE, LONDON, U.K.

When they returned from the Watanabe School they had been assigned projects. The School assigned them two projects for the break, aside from the strong suggestion to practice what they had learned and read and exercise their minds and bodies. Their Charms professors encouraged them to work on their patronus charms. They were taught the charm their final term, but no one in the class had mastered it by the time they left. Their Transfiguration professors had told them to work on their animagus form, specifically the Common Form. All three wanted to master these skills before they returned even though they knew it was not required that they did. Sensei had assigned them four projects, three of which the kids had completed by the end of September. Slytherin's locket, a horcrux, was now secure in a vault beneath Potter House and Neville and Luna were now close friend they saw almost every day. The fourth project, the research into the heirs of the Founders, was proving harder than they had expected and was at times quite frustrating. But two to three days a week the Harry, Hermione, Clarice, Neville and Luna were in the Hall of Records reading documents, taking notes and trying to find the answer. Neville and Luna had not been told exactly why they were there, but were a big help anyway. When they finished this summer at school, they and the other Weekend Warriors in the Class of '89 would be brought in on the secrets.

Harry finally achieved his Patronus in late November. It was a stag. Sirius was there when this happened and exclaimed with glee that Prongs rides again. Harry looked confused until he was told that Prongs was his father's nickname. His dad was an animagus and his common form was a stag. The girls asked him what thought he had used and he simply shrugged and told them he was thinking about the two of them and how his life had changed for the better since they had met. The two girls then got it. Clarice's patronus was a doe, oddly enough it was the same patronus as her mother. Hermione's was an otter. She said she always liked watching the otters at the Zoo.

Shortly after Christmas and once they had developed their abilities to summon their patronus with both of their wands, their staves and



wandlessly as well, Sirius taught them a technique that few knew. It was Potter family magic and had been used by the Order of the Phoenix during the last war. The Patronus, in addition to being a guardian against darkness, could also be used to send messages. The messages had to be short, but the message could be sent to many people practically instantaneously and over great distances. The children saw this as an excellent way to send messages to their friends. But Sirius emphasized that the uses went far beyond such pedestrian pursuits. It was a way to call for help and a way to rally people to you in times of need. The kids began teaching the charm soon thereafter to the "Weekend Warriors."

Today was different. Today the three were going to try for their first animagus transformations. They had been at the preparation for a year in days count. They were being taught the wandless method and practicing that method. The Greco-Roman method was based upon wand charms and potions. It was faster, but dangerous. The wandless method was based upon meditation and rituals designed to help the magical find their form and then become their form. It was safer but took more time to achieve any result. Each had an idea of what they might be, but none of them were certain and they kept their ideas to themselves by mutual agreement.

The three agreed that Harry was probably the closest to being ready to transform, and late this evening they were gathered in Hermione and Clarice's room to see if he could do it. The girls spent several minutes encouraging their best friend and older brother as he was nervous. They had all read that in addition to being hard, the first several successful attempts were awkward. It took time for one to become used to being an animal, time to learn how to stand up and move about, much less tap into their animal's full physical potential. But this was not what had Harry so nervous.

"Come on, Harry," Hermione said, "it's not as if we haven't seen each other that way before."

"But those were accidents," Harry protested. "Well, most were. That time the two of you pranked me while I was in the shower..."

"Harry, we all know that this is what will happen early on."



“And we were told not to try transformation alone,” Clarice added. “Just in case something goes wrong.”

“If it makes you feel any better, we’ll toss a blanket on you before you transform back,” Hermione offered.

“Okay,” Harry replied sheepishly.

Harry knelt down on the floor and closed his eyes. He knew the first try might take a while and that eventually he would be able to manage the transformation almost instantaneously. He also knew if he succeeded, he might be able to retain his form for a few minutes before he had to transform back. Both the speed and length of transformation were a function of practice and experience. As he had been doing for “years” now, he calmed his mind and first focused on his magic. He knew when he achieved this for he always felt warm and tingly when he was consciously in touch with his magical self. He then focused on his form - he was pretty sure it was some sort of bird which he thought was cool - and tried to will his magic into achieving his form.

For several moments, Harry had no idea how long, he felt nothing different. Then he felt something different. His body began to feel different. He focused on calming his mind and accepting the changing sensations as opposed to fighting them or rejoicing about them. He knew he was changing into something and was surprised when he knew he had completed the transformation. He heard his two best friends gasp and he opened his eyes.

His eyesight was very different, as was his sense of hearing and smell. All seemed at the very least enhanced, if not greatly so. He was both startled and frightened when he saw the girls. They were huge, scary huge! He knew he was much smaller than before and that they were not a threat, but he was overwhelmed by the desire to get away from these humans. He tried to stand up and run, but fell over. When he tried again he looked at what had been his arms and saw large wings covered with rich, brown feathers. He could seem to make them work right. After a struggle, he managed to achieve what he guessed was a sitting posture. The huge giants had not moved so



he did the only thing he could think of. He yelled at them to stay away. It was odd. He understood what he had said, but knew it was more a screech than words.

He could feel his body and magic demanding him to change back. He knew that for now there was no sense fighting the urge and he felt his body changing again, more rapidly this time. He closed his eyes and waited until he felt normal. It was not long before he felt himself again, and a chill. He opened his eyes and as he feared, he was naked. Intellectually, he knew it could take weeks before his clothes would transform with him. Still, sitting naked in front of two girls, even if one was his sister and the other his best friend and even if they had seen this before, embarrassed him. Hermione covered him with a blanket. It took him a few moments to collect himself.

"You did it Harry!" Hermione squealed with delight as she leaned in and kissed him on the cheek.

"I did?" Harry asked.

"So cool!" Clarice added.

"What? What was I?"

"Eagle!" Hermione said.

"Hawk," Clarice added.

"Well, a bird of prey. That much is for sure."

"Wicked!" Harry said. Those were supposed to be very useful forms.

"What was it like?" Clarice asked.

"Weird. I could see, hear and smell loads better. One of you needs a bath," Harry smirked, "at least from my bird's point of view. You two looked so big it was scary, but I couldn't seem to control anything."

"They said that would probably happen at first," Hermione nodded.



"As would winding up naked," Clarice giggle.

"Do you have to remind me?" Harry asked with a blush.

"Come now," Hermione said. "You might as well get used to it. It may be weeks before you can transform your clothes and until you can manage your transformation completely, you know you should not do it alone."

"Besides, you're going to see us too," Clarice added.

"Great," Harry moaned.

"And no perving!"

"Like I would over a seven year old sister," Harry moaned. "That's just gross!" He then looked over at Hermione.

"Don't even think about it, buster," Hermione growled.

"So who's next?" Harry asked.

"I'll give it a go," Clarice said.

---

Neither Clarice or Hermione were able to transform that night, although they were not too disappointed as they were both now aware of what their common forms were. They kept this to themselves. The next night, Harry again went first and was able to actually manage to stand up for a bit in his raptor form. Hermione managed her first transformation turning into a large housecat. She was actually able to sit up in her feline form on her first try, but was unable to hold her new form much longer before she transformed back into her now naked self causing Harry to close his eyes and blush furiously and Clarice to laugh at her brother predicament. Harry was told he'd better get used to it. Clarice succeed in her first transformation the following night. She was also a bird, but in her case she was a raven. Like Harry, she too had problems coordinating



her movements. The three realized it would be weeks before they would be comfortable in their new bodies.

WENDESDAY, JUNE 21st 1989 - POTTER HOUSE, LONDON, U.K.

A small group gathered in the parlor. Some knew why they were there, others did not. What they all knew was that Harry, Hermione and Clarice had been working for months on something in the Hall of Records and said they were finished. Neville and Luna had been helping, but really did not say much about what they had been up to all this time. Gathered in the room were: Robert and Rose Granger, Jasmine and Xenophilus Lovegood and their daughter Luna, Augusta Longbottom had her son Neville, Sirius Black and his fiancé Sophie, Remus Lupin and Minerva McGonagall. They were all surprised to see a housecat sitting on a chair and no sign of the three children.

Suddenly, two birds flew into the room. One was a small eagle and the other a raven. The birds landed on two other chairs. The Grangers had gotten used to odd things happening in this magical world and did not think much of the small menagerie gathered in the Parlor. The others, however knew this was unusual. As a group, the three animals transformed into the three missing children.

“Cool!” Neville said. “You going to teach that?”

“You’ll start learning this summer,” Hermione said.

“Wicked!”

“You’re animagi?” Minerva asked.

“Yep!” Harry said. “We began lessons last term of the summer and spent the year doing the necessary exercises. We first transformed in April.”

“And we haven’t seen this until now?” Sirius asked.

“The method we used takes a while,” Hermione said. “Even after we first transformed it took weeks before we could - er - be our animals. Had to learn to walk ...”



"And fly," Harry said.

"Speak for yourself, but yeah."

"Why'd it take so long," Neville asked.

"It's very advanced magic," Minerva said. "Takes a while."

"Not that long," Sirius said. "Only took James and I about one term."

"You are?"

Sirius turned into a large black dog and back again. "It's how I remained sane in Azkaban. Dementors don't pick on mangy old mutts. The fleas, on the other hand, were not so particular."

"Actually," Harry said, "the reasons it took us so long was because we are young. Might have only taken a term if we were teens. Also, we used the wandless method: no spells or potions. Meditation and a few rituals was all it took. We've been told it's a lot safer than the other way."

"We did have a few incidents," Sirius admitted.

"We?" McGonagall asked.

"James, Peter and I," Sirius said. "We learned that werewolves don't attack animals so we became animagi in order to be with our friend when he had his monthly issues."

"So we now have four unregistered animagi living here?"

"Registered?" Robert Granger asked.

"The Ministry of Magic requires all who learn that skill to register. I am." McGonagall added changing into a cat and back again. "They are concerned that the skill might be abused."



“What a load of rubbish,” Sirius said. “What they are concerned about is the compulsive need to control everything and everyone. It’s not like you can steal anything. It takes time just to learn how to transform with your clothes on, even longer for you to keep your wand or money pouch.”

“Be that as it may, the children should...”

“No,” Hermione said. “We don’t have to!”

“I beg your pardon?”

“The law only requires registration if a person becomes an animagus after they turn eleven. I looked it up.”

“Apparently,” Clarice said, “the law is also about controlling what people can learn. Since most all British Animagi train with wand based techniques, and since they cannot use a wand until they start school, registration tells the Ministry who’s not sticking with the approved course materials.”

“I take it,” Robert interrupted, “that we’re not here just ‘cause a few of our number can change into birds, cats and a dog.”

“Thanks Daddy,” Hermione said. “We had another project this year, one which Luna and Neville helped us with.”

“We were trying to find out who the Founders’ Heirs are,” Neville said. “I swear learning magic is easier.”

“That’s why you were off to London so often?” Augusta asked.

Neville nodded.

“And did you find out?”

Neville nodded again.

“All four?”



Neville nodded.

“And I assume Voldemort is one.”

“Actually,” Hermione said, “we were looking mainly into magical heirs. Voldemort is not one.”

“B-but he said...”

“He’s the legal heir,” Harry added. “Long story.”

“Which I assumed you’ll share with us?”

Harry nodded. “The closest living witch is the magical heir of a witch just as the closest living wizard is the magical heir of a wizard.”

Augusta nodded.

“Legal heir is different. That is either the oldest child or someone named in a Will.”

“We’ll begin with Clarice,” Hermione said. “She did the main work on the Huffelpuff line.”

“But that line died out ages ago,” Augusta Longbottom said. “There are no known descendants.”

“Don’t be so sure,” Clarice said. “There were several senior lines that died out, but one line survives to the present and since the magical heir is the closest living witch descendant of the witch, so long as one line survived, there can be an heir.

“We believe Helga Huffelpuff was married or otherwise espoused to a Muggle named Eriks, the Earl of Westmarch. Can’t tell you if he was a vassal of the Anglo-Saxon King or the Danish King as at that time the midlands were under the Danelaw. Helga had a daughter named Magda born around 928. For the next several generations, each daughter had a daughter from Magda through Circe, Pamona, Agnes, Sybil, Minerva and Edith.



“Edith was born in 1082 and married Edmund Longbottom in 1099. Yes, this is one of Neville’s direct ancestors. They only had sons, so this started the First Dormancy of the Magical heir of Hufflepuff. The line traces from William Longbottom, son of Edith and Edmund, through Edward, Edmund and Richard. Richard and his wife had a daughter Martha born in 1211, who became the next magical heir.

“Again, from Martha we have another long line of witches. Martha’s daughter was Samantha, born in 1229 and then there was Agatha, Constance, Charity, Edwina, Tamara, Joan, Enid and Amanda, who was born in 1431. Amanda married Adrian Potter, and yes again, this is one of Harry’s direct ancestors. They had sons and no daughters, so the Potter line is the Second Dormancy and runs from their son Robert, through John, Daniel and David.

“David had a daughter Rebecca born in 1556. She would be the next heir and had a daughter as well, Elizabeth who was followed by Justine, Felicity and finally Penelope, born in 1658. She married Cato Lovegood and the Lovegood line would produce nothing but sons for generations until Luna was born in 1980.”

“And who were the Lovegoods?”

“Let’s see,” Clarice said looking at her notes. “Most were only children. “Cato and Penelope’s boy was Augustus. Then there was Justinian, Alcediades, Hector, Achilles, Fabian, Tiberius, Hadrian, Septimius, Adrian, Plato and Luna’s dad.”

“Why didn’t we know this?” Mr. Lovegood asked.

“Several senior lines died out,” Clarice said. “If they kept going for enough generations, the surviving junior lines might forget their heritage. Circe, born in 959, was Helga’s granddaughter and the youngest of three sisters. Her sister Helga’s line would last another fifteen generations before it completely died out and Enid’s line twelve. Thus, to trace the magic heir, you had to follow Helga’s line from her daughter Morgana, born in 972 all the way through Colleen, born in 1331, who was the last of that line. Then you had to follow Helga and Circe’s sister’s line from Ginevra, born in 980 through Albert Cassius, born in 1209, then back to Circe and her descendants.



And there were other junior lines. Sybil born in 1032 had an older sister who had children and descendants. Charity, born in 1314 had two older sisters who each had descendants. Joan, born in 1378 had an older sister. Justine, born in 1610 had an older sister whose line did not die out until 1902. It was rather annoying.”

“And Luna?”

“She is the only surviving descendant of Helga Hufflepuff. That much is certain.”

“So why didn’t you-know-who come after my family?” Xeno asked.

“We’re pretty sure he had no clue that your daughter was a magical heir,” Clarice said. “The magical heirs of Slytherin and Hufflepuff were the hardest of all to sort out and its debatable which was harder. Both had a fair few senior lines die out requiring us to backtrack loads of generations and start again. He did go after Ravenclaw and Gryffindor as those lines were well known back then.”

“Indeed,” Minerva agreed. “And he almost succeeded.”

“Odd,” Luna said. “Both sides of my family have been in Ravenclaw forever it seems.”

“At least ten to fifteen generations,” Clarice replied. But you have had ancestors in all the Hogwarts Houses.”

“Even if I am Hufflepuff’s Heir,” Luna replied, “I kind of want to be in my parents’ House.”

“Which leads to Hermione’s project,” Harry said.

“I followed the Ravenclaw line,” Hermione said. “Now if you’ve read Hogwarts: A History, you would think that the Founders were not married to one another. Not true. The records show that Rowen Ravenclaw was the wife, or at least a wife of Godric Gryffindor. That pairing produced four children: two were boys and two were girls. For Ravenclaw, we are only concerned about the girls. The oldest was Alice and she did have children, but her line died out within a couple



centuries. The youngest daughter was Helena. She married Xerxes Slytherin, a son of Salazar by his second wife Mya. Xerxes is not a Slytherin heir. The line went dormant immediately as the next few generations only produced sons, or at least only the sons had children. There was Eric, Salazar, Fabian, Harold and Edward.

“Edward had a daughter born in 1082. She was the next Heir of Ravenclaw. She was followed by several heirs: Marie, Lavender, Rose, Frederica, Collette, Calpernia, Bertha, Leanne, Andromeda, and finally Sarah. Sarah was born in 1331. She married Raymond Bones who we believe is an ancestor of our friend Susan. They had no daughters and the line went dormant again. We pass down through Raymond and Sarah’s son Albert, then Jason, Aaron and Thomas. There were other younger daughters during the Bones dormancy whose lines continued. Susan, it seems is one of those descendants. There may be others.

“Thomas had the next heir in his daughter Ariel Bones born in 1458. Ariel was followed by other heirs beginning with her daughter Simone and followed by Tabatha, Erica, Gabrielle, Hortence and Macia, born in 1607. Marcia married Edgar Potter who was yes another of Harry’s great-great-something great grandfathers. After Edgar, the line when dormant again. It passed through James, Oliver, Horace and William Potter before the next Ravenclaw heir was born.

“She was Marta, born in 1732 and there’s been a Ravenclaw Heiress ever since. After Marta there was Anne, Jessica, Suzanne, Constance, Roberta and then Minerva born in 1905.”

“Not Minerva McGonagall,” Xeno said.

Minerva nodded. “I was the oldest child in my family. Aside from my youngest brother and his family and my Great Granddaughter, Voldemort saw to it that my sister and all my other relatives and children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren were killed.”

“And who is your great-granddaughter?” Jasmine asked.

“That would be Hermione here,” Minerva said.



"But ... but the Grangers and not..."

"We adopted Hermione when she was a baby," Rose said.

Minerva nodded. "My daughter Miranda's youngest daughter Erin was Hermione's mother. She was sixteen when she gave birth, so Hermione was set for adoption."

"They're not magical," Jasmine said.

"I know," McGonagall replied. "I've known all along. I was the one who set up the adoption."

"Why?"

"I've known Rose for years and years. Ever since she was a little girl. She was a good friend of one of my grandnieces. I wanted Hermione in a good home with good people and magic was not a factor. In fact, I wanted her to grow up non-magical."

"Why?"

"She can live and blend into both worlds. Should the dark times return, that is a useful talent."

"Another reason why I chose Robert and Rose is because we could remain a part of Hermione's life. Alas, Death Eaters killed my bonnie Erin and her new husband Hermione's father Eric Puckle about the time of Hermione's second birthday. Had that not happened, Erin and David would still be a part of their daughter's life."

"And she's not the last?"

"No. For a long time I thought she was. But my younger brother brought his family out of England before the times were darkest. His descendants live in distant lands and I am leaving this week to spend the summer holidays visiting them."



"I thought you said you were going to be a Minder at school for a couple of terms again," Hermione said.

"I am. It's only a week of the summer. And I intend to visit with my great-grandnieces and nephews during that time - they're in Hermione's year at school," McGonagall said for the others, "but the rest of my summer Holiday will be visiting my other long lost relations."

"Two founders heirs," Jasmine mused. "Both about the same age and goof friends. If the other two are alive and the same age..."

"What?" Sirius asked.

"Hogwarts is owned by the magical heirs," Jasmine said. "All of them. If the four heirs should reunite within its walls in friendship and if they claim their birthright, Hogwarts will be turned over to them for so long as they and their heirs remain true to each other. The Board of Governors exists as the school's legal caretakers. But they cannot deny the rightful owners."

"It's not just Hogwarts," Minerva said. "Everything within a thirty mile radius of the Founder's Tower belongs to the heirs should they find it, or so the legend goes. That would include Hogsmeade, the Black Lake, all of it."

"Whoa," Harry said under his breath.

"Well, that's not going to happen," Augusta said. "Everyone knows Voldemort is the heir of Slytherin."

"And what proof is there?" Harry asked.

"Excuse me?"

"Aside from his work, what proof is there that he is Slytherin's magical heir?"

"He's a parslemouth," Augusta said.



"So am I," Harry said. "So is my sister Clarice."

"You're what?" Sirius asked as others in the room paled.

"That's dark magic," Sophie added.

"Only 'cause here in Britain people think so," Hermione said. "In India, the Americas, Africa, Australia and South East Asia where they have loads of deadly snakes, snake speakers are revered. They rid the villages and fields of the danger. It is a rare gift, usually passed down through generations, but it is not dark. Most magic is grey at worst. What makes it dark is the magician, not the magic."

"How do you know this?" Remus asked.

"It's in books - books that are apparently banned here," Hermione said.

"No, how do you know they can talk to snakes?"

"Our first few weeks third year in Magical Zoology we were tested to see if we had innate animal skills," Harry said. "Clarice and I could talk to snakes."

"And do you have any such skills," Rose asked her daughter.

"Cats. I really seem to have a gift with cats," Hermione said. "All kinds, apparently."

"That explains Puss In Boots," Remus chuckled.

"What?"

"You're animagus has brown fur but its white from the elbows and knees down," Remus said. "I give you a choice, Young Marauder, your Marauder name can be either the brave Puss In Boots or Socks."

"Ergh! Can't I choose another name?"



"No," Sirius said. "Marauders names are chosen by the others, not the victim. Do you honestly think I liked Padfoot at first?"

"Well I'm not going to be Socks!"

"Puss In Boots it is then," Remus smiled. "Do I have a second, Padfoot?"

"Second!"

"Motion carries!"

"Do we get names?" Harry asked.

"Talon," Sirius said pointing to Harry, "Raven," he added indicating Clarice.

"Why Raven?" Clarice and Remus asked.

"Collector of Shiny Objects is too long," Sirius chuckled. "It's what Ravens do," he explained.

"Road Kill Eater isn't terribly flattering either," Robert added.

"So do I have a second?"

"Second!" Remus said.

"Motion carries. Welcome Puss In Boots, Talon and Raven!"

"What about the other heirs?" Jasmine asked.

"Right then," Harry said. "Let's now look at the pain in the neck line of Salazar Slytherin. First off, Slytherin is not and cannot be what Hogwarts: A History says he was."

"Why not?" Minerva asked.

"Cause he was a Muggleborn. First of his line. That book says he was a pureblood bigot which was why he left the school. Maybe he left



because the others were, or maybe it was something else altogether, but he was a Muggleborn and we saw the records for his House. For several generation it was all Muggleborns and Halfbloods. So I doubt he was opposed to teaching magic to Muggleborns. That trend ended when one of the last Slytherin descendants became Headmaster around 1330. That guy was a Pureblood bigot.

“Anyway, Salazar had two sons. His youngest, Xerxes, married Helga Hufflepuff’s daughter. His oldest was named after his best friend: Godric.

“Now, when Godric’s grandson Edgar was at Hogwarts, he had a child with a witch at school. It was a boy named Constantine. But Edgar never married the mother, so the legal heir of Salazar Slytherin was his first son by marriage, Constantine’s half brother Harrod. Voldemort is descended from Harrod, not Constantine. But magic follows first borns, even if they are born out of wedlock. The magical heir of Slytherin is descended from Constantine. Thus we go from Constantine, to his son Eric, to Leif and Rubeus. While Rubeus had a son, that son never had children. But he did have a daughter Helen, born 1111 who had a daughter.

“The line went dormant for generations. Daughter after daughter was born from Helen through Pamala, Lily, Horence, Ellen, Mary until Angela.

“Angela married Philo Peverell in 1272. With that marriage, the legal heir of Slytherin and magical heir were briefly reunited, for Philo was the legal heir of Slytherin. His grandfather Octavian married Aphrodite Slytherin, the last of that name. She was an only child and the direct heir of Harrod Slytherin, her six time great-grandfather. (Harrod, Alexander, Frederick, Charles, John, Edgar, Severus, Salazar then Aphrodite.) So, Darius Peverell son of Angela and Philo, born 1282 was the last legal and magical heir of Slytherin.

“Now it gets weird,” Harry said. “Darius had three sons. His oldest, Antioch, was killed in a tavern having never had a child. Cadmus became the legal heir on his older brother’s death. But Cadmus was either a Squib or had his magic stripped from him for some reason. While he remained the legal heir, magic follows magic. Squibs cannot



be magical heirs. True, if the remaining son's line died out and if Cadmus descendants regained their magic - and they did - the Cadmus line would be the line of both heirs. Everyone thought Igonotus died off. He disappeared. But he did not die and his line survived. So the magical heir passed to the youngest: Igonotus.

"I hate Igonotus. He had eight kids: five sons, three daughter. They all had generations of magical children. The line from his oldest son Eldred went on for twenty generations dying out in 1523. His next oldest son's line - Icarus line - died out in 1612. His next oldest son's nine, the Percival Line died out in 1730. The Ricon line died out in 1496. The Albus line died out in 1775. His oldest daughter Martha's line died out - thankfully - in 1510. Up and down, up and down, up and down ... it was bloody annoying!

"Igonotus Peverell's daughter Darcy was born in 1336. When the Albus Line died out in 1775, the magical heir of Slytherin shifted to one of her descendants. I know this for two reasons. First, because hers became the surviving line and second because in 1775, according to the Potter Family Journal, Michael Potter, my direct ancestor then age 17 suddenly discovered he could talk to snakes. The kid seems a bit creepy as he liked snakes and kept several for years before then, but had never been able to talk to them."

"What makes you sure that means anything?" Remus asked.

"Parseltongue is passed down by magic," Hermione answered. "Male magic, to be precise. While the daughter of a Parseltongue father can talk to snakes and while her son can, her daughters cannot nor can any of their children. Not unless a child becomes the magical heir of the ancestor snake speaker.

"I'll explain with examples," Harry said. "The legal heirs of Slytherin never went dormant long enough to lose that ability. The legal heirs of Slytherin ran from Salazar through eleven generations of sons, ending with a daughter Aphrodite born in 1204. She married Octavian Peverell. The Peverell line ran for another seven generations of sons - through Cadmus - until the birth of Elaine Peverell in 1407. She married Proctor Haskell. Their sons ran for another ten generations until the birth of Deborah in 1583. She married Edgar Weasley. The



male Weasley line ran from their son for a total of four generations to Marcia Weasley born in 1712. She married Tamon Gaunt. The Gaunt male line - by this time destitute - ran seven generations through the birth of Merope Gaunt in 1908. She gave birth to Tom Riddle in 1925 - Lord Voldemort and the legal Heir of Salazar Slytherin. Each of those lines from Slytherin through Riddle were all parseltongues.

“Now, back to Ignotus Peverell. He became the magical heir because his older brother was not magical. By that time he had disappeared such that while ordinarily Cadmus would have been disowned by his father he was not. Hence the interesting break. With Darcy, the magical line went dormant. From Ignotus’s daughter Darcy, the magical line then passed through Renee, Teresa, Jasmine, Eunice until Mary was born in 1457. She married Robert Potter, my direct ancestor. When the magical line passed back to my other direct ancestor in 1775, well ... that makes me the magical heir of Slytherin.”

“But it is well known that the Potters are the heirs of Gryffindor,” Augusta said.

“Indeed we are and have been since the 14th Century,” Harry said. “While the Gryffindor name survived for many centuries, by then the magical and legal heirs had different names. Godric’s oldest son’s line lost the name early. From Godric’s son Alfred, the name survived through Edward, Edmund, Harold and another Godric. That Godric had no son’s. His daughter Olga married Horace Longbottom. And yes, that Longbottom is related to Neville. He was the younger brother of Neville’s direct ancestor. The Longbottom line became the Black line when Alice Longbottom married William Black and they had a son Stephen in 1127. The Black line became the Potter line upon the birth of Sebastian Potter, son of Damian Potter and Clarice Black in 1334. The Potter line runs unbroken from then until now and I am the direct descendent of Sebastian Potter. Hence, I am Gryffindor’s magical and legal heir.”

“Why isn’t it known that you’re also Slytherin’s Heir?” Augusta asked.

“I can only guess,” Harry said. “First off, we did not become the magical heir until the previous line died out in the 18th Century. Even



then, the only reason to suspect such was because we became Parselmouths. I doubt anyone really looked into that as there is a prejudice regarding that ability and the Potters were always Light oriented. Having Dark abilities probably was not something they either wanted known or would have developed."

"There's one thing I don't get," Rose Granger said. "I can accept that you can prove you're magical heirs. What I don't get is how this Parsel thing passed down. You said that it is a male trait passed from a father to his children and that his daughter can pass it to his grandson, but not to his granddaughters, right?"

Harry nodded.

"Yet the magical Slytherin line went dormant twice! Generations of nothing but daughters. How would the trait pass down?"

"The daughters are not magical heirs of a wizard, Mum," Hermione said. "They are place holders, for lack of a better word, until the next magical heir is born. That heir reawakens the old family magic within the bloodline and assumes the inherent magic of his ancestors if that magic has faded. Thus, once the next magical heir was born, he would have the ancient family magical traits, including the long absent parseltounge."

"In addition to the Hall of Record," Harry added, "we also consulted the Potter library here in this house. Neat thing really. Any book in the possession of the family can be brought here just by asking. Apparently, Potter Manor has a huge library including the family chronicles. Each Lord Potter was a chronicler of his times and we have source material dating back to well before the founding of Hogwarts. That's why I suspect the stories most people today believe about Salazar Slytherin are a bunch of rubbish, because the Potter Chronicles written when he was alive paint a very different picture of the man.

"Anyway, the Chronicles of Michael Potter - the first Potter to speak to snakes - talk about discovering this new ability and his speculation and research into how he could achieve as a late teen a talent one was supposed to be born with. He wrote of the books he consulted in



his research - all of which are in the Potter libraries - and we basically followed that research as well. We agree with my ancestor that what had happened was he had become a magical heir with the death of the previously dominant line. Since our research into the family corroborates this conclusion, I am confident that I am the magical heir of Slytherin."

"This is all well and good," Augusta said, "but so what? Of what importance is this information now?"

"The sooner you are aware of a threat, the better equipped you can be to deal with it," Harry replied.

"Excuse me?"

"The last War," Minerva said looking at Harry. Harry nodded. "During the last War Voldemort spent an inordinate amount of his time and resources tracking down and killing anyone who might be or might one day lead to a Founders' Heir," Minerva continued. "The Potter line, with the exception of Harry and Clarice, was wiped out."

"Not entirely true," Harry said, "but Sirius told us that Voldemort followed Pureblood custom. Relations more distant than Third Cousins were not considered family. That's the wizard law. Magic looks much further back. Still, Clarice and I had two Grand Aunts. They were the older sisters of Charles Potter, our Grandfather. They had children and grandchildren, all of whom were killed. Our next closest cousin is - well Neville."

"Neville?" Augusta asked.

"Richard Potter," Neville said. "He was the son of Michael Potter, the first Potter parselmouth. He married Amelia Longbottom, the older sister of Lord Angus Longbottom. Thus, she is my six times Great-Aunt and her husband is my six times Great-Uncle. Harry and I are distant cousins."

"And if Clarice and I were to fail to have children," Harry finished, "Neville would be the next magical heir of Gryffindor and Slytherin."



"Three of the four lines are in a precarious state," McGonagall said. "Hufflepuff and Slytherin have the advantage of not being common knowledge. But as Slytherin is tied to Gryffindor and has been for over two hundred years, it is vulnerable."

"Why does this matter?" Rose Granger asked.

"So long as the four lines survive, Hogwarts cannot be taken by force," Minerva replied. "It can be attacked, but it will not fall. So long as Hogwarts is not taken by force, the Dark can be defeated. It has been that way for a thousand years. Hufflepuff is down to one heir - Luna - and one place holder - Xeno. Gryffindor is down to one heir - Harry, a place holder in Clarice, and one distant line in Neville. All too easy for a future Dark Lord to take over magically. Only Ravenclaw is relatively safe, but we only learned that last year. My brother Ben's family moved abroad and while Hermione is the heir, the line would survive so long as one of my brother's descendants lives. Still, the magic that Hogwarts exerts over this land requires that the heirs are physically living within the British Isles."

"A war is coming," Luna said in a dreamy voice. "The dark forces thought to be defeated will rise again. A war is coming. It is years away, but it is coming and cannot be stopped."

"When?" Jasmine asked.

"Six to ten years," Luna replied.

"Is she a Seer?" Augusta asked.

"Not exactly," Jasmine replied. "That is a more wooly talent. Like all daughters in my family, we can see the trends of history yet to come in a general sense, not specific. And I have seen this War too. And it has the potential to make the last War seem like a minor dispute."

"And can you see the result?" Augusta asked.

"I have seen this coming war since the last one ended," Jasmine said. "As recently as last spring, I saw nothing but death and destruction in



the end - the end of everything and everyone. Something changed. That end is no longer certain. It is still possible, but no longer certain."

"What changed?" Xeno asked.

"I don't know," Jasmine replied. "Something did."

"The Founders' Tower," Harry, Hermione, Clarice and McGonagall said in unison.

"You know of the Tower?" McGonagall asked.

"Sensei mentioned it," Clarice said.

"And it was in the Potter Chronicles more than once," Harry added. "Whenever times were darkest, the writer bemoaned the fact that the tower was lost since Huffelpuff was lost."

"The legend states," Hermione continued, "that should the magical heirs reunite in fellowship, re-enter the Valley of the Hogs and reclaim their birthright, they shall find the Tower. It shall be a beacon of light in the darkness, a symbol of hope when all appears lost and a bastion of strength when beset by enemies. From such tower, good shall gather and shall have the ability to defeat evil whenever and wherever it should arise."

"And what does that mean?" Rose asked.

"It means," Harry said, "that despite the fact that in three summers time when we are expected to get our first Hogwarts letters we - the five of us - will have learned more in Japan that we could ever learn at Hogwarts, we will have to go to reclaim what is ours and prepare for the coming war. We will be safe there and can help those in need of help there. The enemy cannot win so long as Hogwarts and the Tower stand and are untied under the Founders' Lines."

"So this war is won?" Rose asked.

"No," Harry said. "It just is not lost. It seems there is hope."



McGonagall huffed. "Dumbledore's a fool," she said.

"How so?" Sirius asked.

"He believes he is the reason Hogwarts is safe. The real reason is these three children - the heirs who by living keep it safe.



## CHAPTER THIRTY-SEVEN: WARRIORS IN JAPAN

WENDESDAY, JUNE 28th 1999 - BRITISH AIRWAYS FLIGHT 17,  
LONDON TO TOKYO.

Luna Lovegood sat in a window seat and stared out at the sky beyond. She had never been on an airplane before and she really did not know what to expect. It was quite interesting at first as the plane full of more people than she had ever met in her life took off into the sky and rapidly climbed higher. She watched as the ground fell away and from her seat she could see all the way into London itself. She watched as they flew over towns and fields and then over the water. It was not long, however, before there was not much to watch. There was now a blanket of clouds below and she could not tell if they were over land or water. Someone had said something about an in-flight movie, but that was an hour or so away. So, she looked out at the fluffy white sea of cotton and thought about things.

Yesterday, she and Neville and the other “Warriors” who were heading off to Japan and their families gathered at Potter House. They were all told in detail what to expect at their new school. Most of the telling was done by Professor McGonagall who had been there last year and was going to act as a Magical Minder for two Terms again this year, and by Mrs. Granger, who had been the Non-magical Minder for Harry, Hermione and Clarice’s floor all summer and was going to do that again. Luna thought it was very informative.

Luna, Susan and Neville were told that they would start as First Year Magicals. They’d get their wands the first day, but it would be weeks before they’d get to use them. The first few weeks were all about mental discipline and spell theory culminating in what they already could do: wandless spell casting. Then they’d start in with wands. Potions, Astronomy and Herbolgy would be practical from the start. Luna also learned that she’s have to take a test. It was not for magic, but about reading, writing and maths and such. She knew how to read and write and her mum had taught her numbers and how to add and subtract. She learned that Neville and Susan knew that stuff too. Clarice told them they would probably test into Third Year, Non-Magical. Hermione had told the older kids that some would probably test into Fifth Year and others Seventh. As for magic, they all were



starting as Third Years, even though they had already finished Third through Fifth Year. This was because of the wandless requirements. Harry and the others worked them hard to get them through to second year across the board. A few were actually farther ahead, but not in enough areas to sit in a higher year and get the best results.

There were ten students and four adults on the flight. Harry, Hermione and Clarice were in Class 88-5EN (for English speaking, N..E.W.T. Levels.). Luna, Susan and Neville would be in 89-2E (basic magical level) most likely with the others in 89-3E3 or 4E3 (3rd Year Magical Levels.) She found it confusing, but she was told it would make sense someday. Regardless, she would live on the same floor with Jason and Amber Evans, who would share a flat; Colin Dunbar, Justin Parker and Ian Smith, who also would share a flat, and Trisha Powell and Dora Tonks, another group of flat mates. Most likely, she and Susan would have a flat as well. Neville? She hoped Neville wouldn't mind new friends but was not worried as Neville tended to get along with anyone.

She knew this year would be hard. Hermione had stressed that point saying it was probably harder in some ways than Hogwarts as they had far less free time. True, McGonagall added, they had less homework, but they would be taking upwards of twelve classes - more for the older students. Still, it sounded wonderful. She would have her wand now! She would come home with her O.W.L.'s behind her. Hermione had said that homesickness might be an issue...

"How can home make you sick when you're not there," Luna had asked.

"It's an expression. It means that a person really misses their family."

"Oh? Did you?"

"I missed my Dad. Mum and the others were here so it was not so bad."

"Don't fret about it Luna," Susan said. "We're all your friends. It's harder when you're all alone and you won't be."



“Thanks.”

She looked to the person seated next to her who was Neville. He was asleep. She could not blame his. To be totally honest, flying like this was boring. Luna while bored was not tired at all. This was a big adventure for her. True, she and her parents had gone on many an adventure together trying to find elusive magical creatures, but this one was hers alone. How could she sleep? She might miss something. After wondering if Muggle airplanes had some kind of protection against Nargles, for she did not sense any, her mind drifted to a conversation she had with her Dad about a week before. They were seated in the Living Room following a nice breakfast. Her mother was in her Lab in the basement working on some kind of new spell.

“Daddy?” Luna asked.

“Yes Snow Flower?”

“I was thinking.”

“It is you, Luna.”

“Daddy, remember that talk we had at Harry’s the other night?”

“How could I forget it. It was captivating.”

“That ancestor of Harry’s, Ignotus Peverell?”

“What about him?”

“Is he the one from the Deathly Hallows story?”

“Ah! You noticed!”

“Daddy!” Luna said incredulously.

“Yes, Lune, I believe he may be the Ignotus of lore.”

“So, does that mean Harry’s has the Cloak of Invisibility?”



“Can’t say. Harry’s not descended from any of the sons of Ignotus. A cloak would be legal Heir, not magical in most cases. And remember, Snow Flower, the last of the sons’ lines died out about four hundred years later. Not telling where the cloak went or even if it still exists.”

“Oh. And if Cadmus is real too?”

“Much as I’d like to see each of those legendary magical object the brothers possessed in their time, I am not about to go looking for that stone based upon what we learned.”

“Why not?”

“If it did pass down and was not lost, Luna dear, then it’s last owner was You-Know-Who. Imagine my surprise to learn that my little Girl is the Heir of Hufflepuff! Can’t risk it.”

“Why not?”

“Mummy thinks You-Know-Who will return, Luna Love. He wanted to kill all the Heirs. I cannot risk that with one so precious as you.”

Luna could only smile at the memory.

THURSDAY, JUNE 29th, 1989 - WATANABE SCHOOL OF  
MAGICAL STUDIES, KYOTO JAPAN

It was mid morning when the British Invasion, as they had begun calling themselves, arrived at the Red Gate by portal. The Red Gate was the main entrance to the enchanted land beyond that was the Watanabe School of Magical Studies. Harry smiled as he stepped through the gate into the bustle of the shopping district of the town. This town was where the faculty and staff of the school lived, and many others for the families needed to shop and that meant a need for shop keepers as well as others. Including the 4,000 or so students who would pass through the school this summer, this school housed over 10,000. There were children playing in the streets and Harry knew on the grounds as well. Most would be day students when they were old enough. There were all kinds of shops. You could buy most



everything here, but it was not on the same level as the magical shopping district in central Kyoto. This was geared more to day to day needs, particularly in the summer when the whole place underwent time compression.

When they first explored this large town last summer, Harry wondered about that. He wondered if a baby was born here would it remain a baby during the time compression. He asked and found out that the magic did not affect children under the age of four. They would age and grow normally so that if a baby was born just before Time Compression, it would be about four when the summer ended. Sometime between their fourth and fifth birthday, the time compression would stall their growth and they would only age during real days. Harry thought about that. He was sure his new mother had as well as some kids began losing their baby teeth around that time and would then be toothless for a long time.

As he walked through the streets looking into the familiar shops and smelling the wonderful food he remembered from his last year, Harry had a feeling of home. In one way, he had brought home with him both times. Last year it was Hermione and Clarice. This year it was Rose Granger, Hermione, Clarice, Sirius and Sophie, Neville and Luna and the others. Still, he had lived here in this place far longer than he had lived in London. By the end of this summer, he would have lived here longer than he had ever lived with the Dursleys. London was his true home now. But this wonderful place was his second home and he was glad to be back.

Neville was bordering on sensory overload. This place was old, he could tell, but it seemed more vibrant in many ways than even Diagon Alley. Made him wonder about this Nishiki place which was supposed to be even better. There were venders selling food. There were stores that sold all manner of things. There were even a fair few restaurants and then there were the food carts. Unlike the food venders who sold stuff to be taken home, prepared and cooked, the carts sold ready to eat things, although none of it Neville had seen before. The food smelled strange but wonderful. Neville was hungry. It had been ages since they had a proper meal as the meals on the muggle airplane, while okay, were small.



Neville and the others followed their leaders. The five who were here last year seemed both at ease with the setting and could also speak the language. It was good that someone did, because it did not seem like any of the people who lived here were speaking English.

They were led into a shop of some sort and as soon as they entered Neville knew it was a place to eat. There were long tables with people eating and chatting away. The British Invasion took their seats on either side of a table that could easily sit three times their number.

"What are we doing here?" Sirius asked.

"Fancy an meal?" Harry replied.

"I could use a bite," Sirius agreed, as did all the others.

"It won't be too big," Harry said, "but it should tie us over until the feast this evening."

A young woman came over and Harry seemed to order for all of them in Japanese. Almost immediately, glasses of something appeared before all of them and bowls of some kind of noodle soup. There was western style flatware, but each person also had an odd looking dipper, for lack of a better word. Maybe a tiny ladle, Neville thought. They also had two sticks that looked kind of like undersized wands. Neville wondered what they were for.

"What's this?" someone asked.

"Miso soup with noodles," Harry said. He then proceeded to give the newcomers their first lesson on things Japanese. While they had familiar eating utensils, they were introduced to the ladle thing, which was actually the asian style of eating spoon. However, one did not eat noodles with a spoon. In Japan, you used chopsticks - called Hashi in Japanese - for the noodles and Harry showed them all how to use them. In Japan, there were no knives and forks for eating. Everything was prepared bite sized to be eaten with the two sticks.

Neville got the hang of the hashi mostly. He knew it would take practice, but at least it was not as hard as it looked at first. The soup



and noodles were amazing, although all the newcomers had to get used to the fact that in Japan one slurped the noodles up. This was a faux pas in the west, but it was expected here in the east. Next came strange looking things on a block of wood. They were told it was sushi. While each had several different kinds, Harry explained there were two general kinds. One was a roll of rice and other things, either vegetables or fish or both wrapped in dried seaweed. The other was a slice of fish or something atop a ball of compacted rice. They were told that this was considered snack food here and one could dip it in soy sauce or eat it as is. There were also two other items on the board. One was a greenish past called wasabe, which one could eat with the sushi or between each piece. It was said to be a very spicy horseradish. The other was red and was pickled ginger. One ate a piece between sushi rolls. Neville, like many of the others were skeptical about this fare, but in the end he enjoyed it immensely. He had to admit, though, that there was a such thing as too much wasabe.

The group no sooner paid the bill and left the place when they met up with two squealing girls and excited boys. "There they are!" an excited voice called out as four children ran towards the group.

"Hey guys," Harry said.

"Cousins," Hermione added with a smile.

"Hey Cuz," one of the boys said giving Hermione a hug. "And don't you lot think I'm hugging you too," he added. "She's family and you lot are not!"

"Family?" McGonagall asked.

"Right then," Hermione said, "I'd like to introduce you to my Great-grandmother and your great-grandaunt Minerva McGonagall. We call her Aunt Minnie."

"Speak for yourself Miss Kitty," Sirius chuckled.

"What?" Minerva asked.



"Aunt Minnie," Hermione said, "you do remember we found them here, right? This is Steve McGonagall, your brother Ben's great-grandson and his sister Erin. And these two are Stacy and Lyle Donovan, also your brother's great grands."

"You're Grand Ben's big sister," Erin McGonagall asked.

Minerva nodded. Sirius could not help but notice the tears in his former Professor's eyes. He watched as the little red haired girl threw herself at the usually stoic woman and hugged her.

"It's too bad Mum's not here this year," Lyle said. He then explained for the benefit of the others who looked confused. Ben McGonagall was Minerva's younger brother and had fled England with the whole family during the War. Ben and his oldest son John and his family went to Canada. Ben's daughter Emily Pierce and her family went to Australia and Ben's youngest, Richard, took his family to New Zealand. Steve and Erin were Richard's grandchildren by his son John. Stacey and Lyle were also Richard's grandchildren by his daughter Emily. The day had turned into a mini McGonagall family reunion for a moment.

"Who are the rest of this lot?" Steve asked.

"Oh," Harry said. "Since this seems to be a family thing, I'd like to introduce my cousins Jaseon and Amber Evans. Their dad was my Mum's half brother. And this is my cousin Dora from my Dad's side of the family. The rest of this lot are our friends," Harry said introducing the others as well.

"Seems you won't be the only Brits here this year," Steve McGonagall said.

"This is just the start," Harry said. "I expect we'll see quite a few more in the next few years."

"So the Brits have decided to join the modern world at last," Stacey Donovan quipped.

"Some of us," Dora Tonks finished.



FRIDAY, JUNE 30th, 1989 - SCHOOL DAY 6 - WATANABE  
SCHOOL OF MAGICAL STUDIES, KYOTO JAPAN

The Newcomers had gone through their orientation, gotten their wands and taken their exams. They lived on the tenth floor of Tower Three. Harry and the others lived in the twelfth floor. Their common rooms were located on the eleventh floor so they would see each other quite often even though they were in different years.

Neville, Susan and Luna tested into third year non-magical studies just as Harry, Hermione and Clarice did the year before. The older three boys tested into seventh year while the other four were in fifth. It turned out that Sirius Black was their year's magical minder. Sirius's fiancé Sophie was a Healer at the Campus hospital and shared the flat with Sirius.

Each "Year" had a different tour of the campus. Neville was impressed with everything he saw. He had never been to any school before, so he was in no position to judge the classrooms in anyway, but they all seemed impressive. The Dojos where they would learn martial arts really stunned him. He did not know what to expect but was surprised with both their simplicity and aesthetic. But what really impressed Neville were the gardens. The campus was surrounded by lush gardens. They would study Herbology in special greenhouses, but the gardens were amazing. It was heaven on earth, Neville thought and over the coming months and years he would spend a lot of time wandering the gardens lost in thought. When there he found a sense of peace and had decided that when he returned to Britain he might try and recreate some aspects of these gardens at his family's estate.

---

"Welcome to N.E.W.T. level Defense," a tall, fit, older man with very short grey hair said. "I am Professor Smith. I am an American and am a retired Sergeant Major, U.S. Marine Corps. And yes, I am also a wizard! Most of the world's armed forces have a magical section, and I was in just such a section."



“As you know, over the next four terms one of your projects will be to find you combat animagus form. Who here has achieved their common form?”

Of the twenty-five in the class, all but three hands went up.

“You three? You first young man. Name?”

“Aaron,” the boy said, “Aaron Connolly. I’m from Massachusetts and my Dad owns a fishing trawler. I was at sea most this past year. I worked on the meditation and stuff, but could not do the rituals. Kind of hard on a tossing ship.”

“You’re job on ship?”

“Helmsman, lookout and I washed dishes in the scullery.”

The other two said they were close, but had not managed the transformation yet. Everyone else was asked to tell the others what their common form was. For each form mentioned, the Professor told the student its defensive attributes as they all had some. Harry’s eagle was great for surveillance as he could fly high and still see details. Hermione’s cat was great for stealth and infiltration. Ravens were common enough that Clarice could probably listen in on conversations, if they were held out doors and with an open window.

“Once you have mastered a common form, you will find that finding your combat form is much easier,” Professor Smith said. “Mastering it, thought, might not be. Unlike common forms, a combat form can be a magical creature. It is always and aggressive predator. Should you become a magical creature, in addition to mastering its physical abilities and controlling its instincts, you would also have to learn to master its magic, and that can take time.

“In addition to your continued animagus training, we will also continue with dueling and tactics. You will learn team combat tactics and I can assure you that will be on your exams.



"We will also be studying the Dark Arts, as they are called in Europe. Not with the mind in learning how to do them, but to learn to recognize them and how to counter them. In this vein, our definition of Dark Arts is any magic designed solely to cause harm to a human, compulsion magics - as in magics that force a person to do anything against their own free will, and any magic requiring human sacrifice - and yes there are such magics out there.

"Finally, through your O.W.L.s, you were taught what magic can do. At this level, we must also teach you it's limitations for it does have limitations, which brings us to today's lesson.

"In 1692, the European magical nations signed the International Statute of Secrecy and upon implementation disappeared from the non-magical world. Why?"

"Witch burnings," a boy answered.

"Actually no," Professor Smith replied. "And why not?"

Hands were raised and he called on Hermione.

"By 1692, the burning of suspected witches was a thing of the past," Hermione said.

"Correct. And how many actual witches were burnt at the stake?"

"Not many. At least 50,000 women were burned, probably a great deal more over the centuries. Of that, there are only 107 known cases of a true witch actually being killed that way. Almost all true witches who were burned were believed to be suicides since the Flame Freezing Charms is both easy and can be done without a wand."

"So why was the Statute passed in 1692 if the persecutions were over?"

"Firearms," Hermione said.



“Actually, it’s not that simple,” Professor Smith said. “Firearms of some sort had been around since the 14th Century. The first ones were crude and were as much if not more of a threat to the gunner as it was to the intended victim. They had a nasty habit of blowing the gunner to pieces. By the mid-15th century, the Matchlock was the common firearm. It was safer and more reliable than the past, but it was still dangerous and useless if there was a breeze. Moreover, it was not very accurate beyond about twenty yards or so. It was used in battle mostly to take out armored cavalry as it could penetrate their armor with some ease at close range.

“By the mid to late 16th Century, the wheelock was invented. It resulted in the first true hand guns or pistols. It was both safer and a bit more reliable than the matchlock, but it was incredibly complicated and extremely expensive. Basically, only the really wealthy could afford them so they never saw widespread use.

“In the 17th Century, a new firearm came into being called the flintlock. It was more reliable than any of the passed weapons and was also cheaper, significantly cheaper. Most people of even modest means could afford one and there was a huge explosion in the number of firearms. Before the flintlock, most soldiers were still armed with likes and swords. Afterwards, they were all armed with muskets. Now, why does the proliferation of reliable firearms have anything to do with magic?”

“Because magic can’t stop a bullet,” a voice answered.

“Actually, that’s not entirely true. Allow me to demonstrate.” A target dummy appeared. “Someone case a shield charm on the target, please.”

One of the older boys did as he was asked and the professor cast a charm as well. Shields were normally invisible, but now the shield could be seen. The professor pulled out a short handgun that he told the class was a flintlock piston similar to the ones in use at the time of the Statute. He cocked the hammer back, took aim and then there was a flash, followed by a bang as the gun fired. The shield collapsed, but the dummy remained unharmed.



“As you can see, a shield charm will stop a bullet. But it will collapse from the impact as well.” He recast the shield and the charm that made it visible. “Unfortunately, unless you were in a formal duel, you seldom would ever face a single gun.” This time, he pulled two pistols and fired. The shield fell and the dummy was thrown violently against the wall. “Add to the problem it takes more time to raise a shield than to fire a gun and the fact that bullets travel faster than spells, and you might envisage the problem. Guns such as these made it possible for an untrained non-magical to kill even the most powerful of wizards. True, surprise tended to help as a wise wizard has noted that the best way to stop being hit by a bullet is not to be there when the bullet arrives. But, there are far more non-magicals with guns than there are witches and wizards, and guns today are far more powerful, accurate and much longer ranged weapons than these pistols with a much higher rate of fire.”

Now there were seven target dummies, each shielded as the other had been. The Professor pulled out a very different looking handgun. It was all black. “This is the Beretta model 92,” he said. “It’s made by an Italian company that is the oldest gun maker in the world. It is semi-automatic, which means it fires and reloads automatically and will shoot one round each time the trigger is pulled and keep shooting so long as it has ammunition. It carried fifteen rounds in the magazine. It is the standard side arm in many modern day armies.”

He put a magazine into the grip of the gun, pulled the slide back to chamber the first round and then opened fire on the dummies. In less than four seconds, he placed two rounds on each of the targets, shattering the shield and sending the dummy flying.

The class was impressed.

“Admittedly, I am a good shot,” the Professor said. “Still, had this been real, one of the last of my opponents may have taken me down. And this is just a handgun. It is only truly accurate within thirty meters. A rifle can be accurately fired by a barely trained soldier at one hundred meters and in the hands of a marksman can kill out to a thousand. Well beyond the range of a wand. Moreover, modern rifles bullets are supersonic. What does that mean?”



"It means they travel faster than the speed of sound," Harry answered.

"Correct. That means your first warning that you're being shot at from a distance is when you are hit. The sound of the rifle comes a bit later. When you consider that there are more trained soldiers in most countries than there are magicals of any age, you begin to see the problem. To defeat an enemy with a modern firearm with magic, you need a numerical advantage of at least three to one and you must get in close. Their numbers generally preclude that option. And guns are not the only nasties they can throw at you in a battle. Should it ever come down to a war between magic and the rest of the world, magic will lose."

"Surely there is a way?"

"The way is not to fight them," the Professor said. "Remember, it's not just the armies. Non-magical law enforcement has at least access to guns. In many countries they are armed almost as well as the average soldier. In the United States, for example, there are between two and three hundred thousand magicals. There are over one hundred million guns in legal use. The best way to avoid a slaughter is not to invite one. The Statute of Secrecy has done just that for the most part, but there was a war in Britain that ended not ten years ago that almost invited large scale non-magical military intervention. I know because my unit was training for possible inclusion in a combined operation with our non-magical British allies when the war came to a sudden end. Had we intervened, it would have been a disaster for the British magicals."

"Why?" Hermione asked. "At the height of that war there might have been a thousand Death Eaters and their supporters, maybe less."

"A wand is a weapon," Professor Smith said. "It is many other things, but it is a weapon. Any person carrying a weapon is a potential threat. Magicals in Britain were not fighting like an Army, more like insurgents. They did not wear uniforms or otherwise clearly identify themselves as combatants. True, the Death Eaters did wear something akin to a uniform on the attack sometimes. But otherwise, you could not tell a Death Eater from a shop keeper. Anyone with a wand could be considered a valid target unless they surrendered



immediately and without resistance. Even those fighting for the light or doing their best to stay out of the fray would probably have resisted non-magical intervention with the unfortunate result of their demise.”

“How bad was it?” Harry asked.

“You’re from Britain, yes?”

“Three of us are.”

“And there are those of us whose families moved because of that War,” Erin McGonagall said.

“It was bad,” Professor Smith replied. “You will be studying it in history sometime this summer if you have not begun to do so already, but I can give you an overview.

“That war officially began when the leader of the insurgency - an evil tyrant by the nom de guerre of Lord Voldemort and his Death Eaters openly declared themselves in 1970. They had been active earlier, probably as early as 1964, but they had kept a low profile back then. The war came to a surprisingly sudden end in early November 1981. Voldemort had been killed while on a raid and his organization collapsed like a house of cards as soon as the word got out. However, but for the fortuitous death of the leader, the Death Eaters were on the verge of winning. Estimates are that the Magical government in Britain might have lasted another six months, probably less. When it fell to the tyrant and his forces, the non-magicals were going to intervene.

“Make no mistake. The non-magical governments know far more about our world than most of us believe. They knew what was going on and knew that if nothing happened, the War would spread to the continent. This situation could not be tolerated because it risked triggering a general war in Europe, one which would have involved NATO - the western countries, and the Warsaw Pact - the eastern countries. Everyone knew that war could well be the end of everything. Hence, NATO decided that if the British magicals could not defeat the Death Eaters, they would intervene with force. It would have been the end of Magical Britain for all intents and purposes. But



what are a few thousand lives when hundreds of millions if not billions hung in the balance, for that would have been the death toll had the war spread to the continent.

“You see, that kind of war probably would have involved nuclear weapons. Those are bombs. They can be launched from half way around the world and hit within yards of their target. And one of those bombs is powerful enough to destroy an entire city. They have only been used twice. Back in 1945, the Americans used two such bombs on Japan to force an end to what was then the bloodiest war in history. Fifty million or more died in that war. Those two bombs destroyed the cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. And those bombs were tiny compared to today. Today’s bombs are at least one hundred times as powerful.

“A nuclear war would result in the utter destruction of Europe, Russia and North America probably within a day or two at the most. The after effects would probably kill off most of the rest of the world. If destroying magical Britain would prevent even the possibility of just such a war, the casualties were considered acceptable.”

“So the non-magicals knew what was going on and did nothing?” a girl asked.

“Not hardly. Their special forces were involved as early as 1974. It is estimated that around one hundred Death Eaters were killed during the war. Most were killed by non-magical special forces. The British non-magical government’s covert operations were the only consistent success against the Death Eaters. But their raids were infrequent.”

“Why?”

“The government wanted clear targets. British Intelligence would try and identify such targets, preferable a location they could attack without drawing too much attention to the operation or risk exposing our world to the general population. Targets tended to be isolated safe houses where Death Eaters congregated. Once a target was identified, a combat team would be sent in to wipe out the Death Eaters they found at the site and try and rescue any prisoners. But getting good intelligence was a problem. While British Intelligence did



have agents within the Magical Government, that government had little useful information and there were no agents within the Death Eater ranks.”

“Why didn’t the magical government have information?” Clarice asked.

“They refused to see it as a war until it was almost too late. They treated the Death Eaters as criminals and each Death Eater attack as a separate crime. Consequently, they only acted after something happened and most of their actions were to hide the effects from the non-magicals. It was not until 1980 when Millicent Bagnold became Minister for Magic that the government began to act. Until then, the magical government tried to arrest Death Eaters. Death Eaters had no problem killing. But the law then prevented the use of deadly force even in defense. Consequently, the government was able to do little or nothing. Beginning in 1980, a special squad of highly trained combat magicals began trying to take the fight to the enemy. But they numbered maybe twenty-five against hundreds. For all intents and purposes, it was the occasional raids by British Special Forces that did anything to keep the enemy from winning, and even that was not enough. That was why they were planning large scale military intervention. The magical government, even when it finally acted, was unable to control the situation and the carefully planned raids by Special Forces while successful were not enough.

“Even though the non-magical government knew of our world and of that war, it was reluctant to intervene on a large scale. For centuries, they left us alone and prefer to leave it that way. So long as we do not pose a threat to them that they cannot ignore, they prefer that we sort out our affairs. Even then, as that War shows, they would prefer as little involvement in our affairs as possible. Large scale operations would necessarily expose magic to the rest of the world and no one knows what the consequences of that may be. Times are not what they once were, but reactions cannot be predicted.

“While the non-magicals would prefer to leave us alone, the Statute of Secrecy exists so that we make sure that they have no reason not to. It was enacted at a time when numbers and technology had exceeded the power of certain magics. We could no longer hope to defend ourselves against an organized attack. The only real defense



to non-magical technology is non-magical technology and as we are outnumbered by more than a thousand to one, even then it cannot save us. Magic is wonderful and can do amazing things. But it cannot do everything.

“One of the objectives at N.E.W.T. level is to study non-magical warfare. This includes their wars and their weapons. Hopefully, armed with such knowledge, people like you will one day see to it that another War like the one that happened in Britain cannot happen again.”

TUESDAY, JULY 11th 1989 - SCHOOL DAY 600 - WATANABE SCHOOL OF MAGICAL STUDIES, KYOTO JAPAN

It was a sunny Real Day that found the three children seated with their classmates and numerous other students. This was their first graduation exercise as they had all completed their N.E.W.T.s and their basic magical education was now at an end. They would each walk across a stage and receive their N.E.W.T. certificates. They already knew how they had done.

As usually, they had strait Outstandings. Hermione was once again at the top of the class and had earned With Distinctions in Runes, Charms and Defense and Honors in Arithmancy and Transfiguration. Harry was second earning With Distinctions in Runes and Charms and Honors in Defense and Potions. He really enjoyed N.E.W.T. level defense. He had always enjoyed Potions. Clarice was third again earning With Distinctions in Charms, Defense, Rituals and Transfiguration. She was not disappointed. She already knew that had she scored a few point higher in Defense and Transfiguration, she would have beaten Harry and Hermione for Honors.

All three now held I.C.W. licenses for Shifting, Apparition and Porkey creation. They could use these magics legally anywhere on earth as I.C.W. trumped any local restrictions. They had also achieved their Combat Animagus forms. Harry was a Gryffin, a right nasty magical creature if riled and one that could fly. Clarice was a Dire Wolf, a magical and very powerful relative of the wolf and a creature that could kill werewolves with ease, among its many other talents.



Hermione's form was not magical, but was one of the most feared land predators in the world. She was a Bengal Tiger.

The three had been magical prefects since the beginning of the Summer. That position ended upon taking their N.E.W.T.s. They had each learned, however, that they would become non-magical prefects next term - their tenth year in non-magical studies. They would hold this position, which was really no different in its responsibilities, until they finished Secondary School at the end of the summer.

In the audience were their fellow Brits. This included the students and the Minders. Also there were scores and scores of families from all over. Minerva had returned for this day. After the first two terms, she had left for New Zealand to visit with her lost relations there. The Donovans and New Zealand McGonagalls were here for their children's N.E.W.T. presentation and Minerva had come with them. She would be leaving for Britain the next day to return to her duties as Hogwarts Deputy Headmistress.

This was the Magical Graduation. There was a separate ceremony for the non-magical school, one which the three would participate in at the end of the summer and, if they applied themselves, they would get their first Masters Certificates as well.

They sat and waited as this Terms Masters recipients received their awards. This was a ceremony for the English speaking students. All over campus, similar ceremonies were underway for the students from other countries. Finally, the last Masters Certificate was awarded and Dr. Johnson, Dean of the English Students stepped forward.

"Will the N.E.W.T. class of 1989, Second Session please rise?" he said.

A cheer went up from the seventy students, including all twenty five from their floor. One by one, each student was called forward in alphabetical order. The number of N.E.W.T.s each earned was announced along with the number of Outstandings and each With Distinction or other Honor. For those continuing on to Masters levels, their chosen Masters was also announced.



“Hermione Jane Granger, age nine, Great Britain,” was announced. “Nine N.E.W.T.s, nine Outstandings, With Distinctions in Ancient Runes, Charms and Defense. Honors in Arithmancy and Transfiguration. Ms. Granger will be studying for her Defense Mastery beginning next term.”

After several more students, “Clarice Lillian Jameson, age seven, Great Britain!”

“I’ll be eight tomorrow,” Clarice said, earning a laugh from the audience.

“Nine N.E.W.T.s, nine Outstandings. With Distinctions in Charms, Defense, Ritual Magic and Transfiguration. Ms. Jameson will be studying for her Basic Healer Masters next term.”

Finally, the last of the three was next.

“Harry James Potter, age eight, Great Britain!”

Harry stepped forward.

“Nine N.E.W.T.s, nine Ourstandings. With Distinctions in Ancient Runes and Charms. Honors in Potions and Defense. Mr. Potter will begin studying for his Defense Masters next term.”

Harry walked forward. “I dare say,” Dr. Johnson said to him, “we have been pleasantly surprised with you and your countrymen. Good job and keep it up.”

“Thank you, Sir,” Harry replied as he received his N.E.W.T. certificate.

TUESDAY, JULY 29th 1989 - SCHOOL DAY 1500 - WATANABE  
SCHOOL OF MAGICAL STUDIES, KYOTO JAPAN

Robert Granger had arrived on Campus for the first time promptly at eight o’clock in the morning along with a contingent of parents from Great Britain. Nine other families were with him, all parents of Weekend Warriors six to see their children receive their N.E.W.T.s.



Augusta Longbottom, Amelia Bones and the Lovegoods were here to support their fellow countrymen and visit this school that their children had been on about since their first letters home. Robert was here to see his three receive their Secondary School Diplomas and their first Masters certificate. He was in awe with the campus. It was breathtaking and wandering the gardens, he could see why it was possible for children to endure what he knew was a brutal academic schedule. The grounds were peaceful to say the least.

This day was for visiting. The final graduation ceremonies were always the largest. The actual graduations would be the next day. Robert was shown the campus by "his" kids and his wife. They met faculty here and there and he saw where his children had lived the past two summers. Their living accommodations were better than he recalled from University. Again, it seemed the whole campus was designed to reduce the stress on the students. He watched with a smile as Neville showed his Gran his new stove. Just like last year, the kids had climbed Mt. Fuji on Clarice's birthday. Clarice and her classmates got normal walking sticks, having already received their staves. The new students got the magical ones.

It seemed the British students had all done well here. The older students had all received great marks on their O.W.L.s two terms after Harry, Hermione and Clarice earned their N.E.W.T.s. Across the board, they were all in the upper quarter of their class. Then again, Robert learned, the full summer students tended to do better than those who were only here for two terms. The "British Invasion" would be leaving Japan on August 1st. Graduation would be on July 30th, Neville Longbottom's ninth birthday and Harry's ninth birthday would be the next day. It had been decided they would all stay to celebrate the birthday's with their friends.

The next morning found Robert Granger still in awe with the school and seated with his wife and scores and scores of other families to watch the non-magical graduation exercises. Only Harry, Hermione and Clarice would be participating from Great Britain. They watched as older students walked across the platform to receive their various university degrees. Finally, Dr. Johnson announced: "Will the Secondary School Class of 1989, Fifth Session please rise." Robert had his camera out snapping photographs of his kids as they waited



for their turn to cross the stage. This was not like the N.E.W.T. exercises. They did not announce results in detail. Students who finished in the top ten percent were announced With Honors. Students who held positions at the school were also identified. Likewise, students returning for University were identified, although their fields of study were not as they would not be required to decide that until after their third college term.

“Hermione Jane Granger, age nine, Great Britain, with honors.”

Hermione walked across the stage to receive her diploma.

“Ms. Granger finishes as Class Valedictorian. She served six terms as magical prefect, four as non magical prefect and two as Co-Head Girl. She will return next year for University.

“Clarice Lillian Jameson, age eight, Great Britain, with honors.” Clarice walked across the stage. “Ms. Jameson finishes third in her class. She served six terms as magical prefect, four as non magical prefect and two as Co-Head Girl. She will return next year for University.”

“Harry James Potter, age eight, Great Britain, with honors.”

Taking a page from Clarice, he announced: “I’ll be nine tomorrow!”

“Mr. Potter finishes Second in his class. He served six terms as magical prefect, four as non magical prefect and two as Head Boy. He will return next year for University.”

That afternoon after a long reception and lunch and plenty of photographs, Robert was in the audience again. This time, nine families from Great Britain would watch their children cross the stage.

“Will the candidates for Defense Masters please rise.”

Robert watched as Harry, Hermione and several from their floor rose. This was not like the other ceremonies. There were no honors or such. Each student crossed the stage and received their Certificate and a sword. Robert was later told they were magical swords forged



here on campus and both a weapon and symbol of the qualified magical warrior. The only additional announcements made was when a recipient had selected to return for an additional Mastery.

“Hermione Jane Granger, age nine, Great Britain. Ms. Granger will return next summer to pursue her Mastery in Transfiguration.”

“Harry James Potter, age not quite nine,” the Dean quipped, “Great Britain. Mr. Potter will return next summer to pursue his Mastery in Potions.”

After several more masteries were bestowed: “Will the Candidates for Basic Healer please rise.” Clarice stood along with seven other students.

“Clarice Lillian Jameson, age eight, Great Britain.” Clarice crossed the stage. “Ms. Jameson will return next summer to pursue her Defense Mastery. Afterwards she intends to pursue and advanced Healer certification.”

When the final Masters Certificate (in Zoology) was distributed: “Will the N.E.W.T. Class of 1989, Fifth Session please rise.”

As had happened with Harry, Hermione and Clarice what seemed like ages ago to them, one by one each of their countrymen was called across the stage. They had done quite well overall. They were all in the upper quarter of their year, all had at least nine N.E.W.T.s with at least five Outstandings each and many had earned at least one With Distinction. There were, however, no Honors among them, but it was still an exceptional performance.

Finally, the last of the British Students was called. “Nymphadora Tonks, age fifteen, Great Britain. Ms. Tonks received nine N.E.W.T.s, six Outstandings and With Distinctions in Charms and Defense. She will return next summer to pursue her Masters in Defense.

“I would like to pause here and make an observation,” Dean Johnson said. “Last summer, three brilliant young students from Great Britain started here with us. You saw them today receive their first Masters. They finished in the top three of their year in both magical and non-



magical studies setting a high standard for anyone. They were our first students from their country in over twenty years.

“This year, they were joined by ten of their countrymen. Ms. Tonks is one of seven who earned their N.E.W.T.s with us this summer. Those seven all finished in the top twenty percent of the year, a remarkable feat considering their ages as they are among the oldest students we have ever admitted which might have been a detriment considering our emphasis on the wandless magical arts. Those seven far exceeded our expectations and we as a faculty are expecting more pleasant surprises from each of them in the coming summers.

Three of their countrymen have completed their O.W.L.s this past term. They have maintained the standard of excellence and achievement we are now coming to expect from our British cousins. Those three all finished in the top ten percent of their classes. Ms. Susan Bones earned nine O.W.L.s with six Outstandings. Mr. Neville Longbottom earned ten O.W.L.s, eight Outstandings, two With Distinctions and Honors in Herbology. Ms. Luna Lovegood earned ten O.W.L.s, all outstandings, three With Distinction with Honors in Zoology and ranks second in her year. Not one of our British students scored less than an Exceeds Expectations on any O.W.L. or N.E.W.T. they took. We would like to take this opportunity to welcome our British cousins back to our school. They have as a group set a very high standard indeed.

A/N 1: Below are notes that are not included in detail in the story. This is for those of you who are curious.

A/N 2: Here are the notes I used to do the history in the last chapter...

Jr. means an older sibling's line died out.

Jrx2 means more than one older line died out.

Highlighted are periods when the heir was dormant.

Husbands are named when a new Line is formed.

Dates are approximate periods where the person would be born.

Here, a generation is 25 years, longer than average but not by much.

You may note that I have 43 generations of descendant's in each line but Riddle's. That is probably unrealistic, but I was lazy.



0. 900 - 910 HELGA HUFFLEPUFF
1. 925 - 935 Magda
2. 950 - 960 Circe jr
3. 975 - 985 Pamona
4. 1000 - 1010 Agnes
5. 1025 - 1035 Sybil jr.
6. 1050 - 1060 Minerva
7. 1075 - 1085 Edith Edmund LONGBOTTOM
8. 1100 - 1110 William
9. 1125 - 1135 Edward
10. 1150 - 1160 Edmund
11. 1175 - 1185 Richard
12. 1200 - 1210 Martha
13. 1225 - 1235 Samantha
14. 1250 - 1260 Agatha
15. 1275 - 1285 Constance
16. 1300 - 1310 Charity jrx2
17. 1325 - 1335 Edwina
18. 1350 - 1360 Tamara
19. 1375 - 1385 Joan jr
20. 1400 - 1410 Enid
21. 1425 - 1435 Amanda Adrian POTTER
22. 1450 - 1460 Robert
23. 1475 - 1485 John
24. 1500 - 1510 Daniel
25. 1525 - 1535 David
26. 1550 - 1560 Rebecca
27. 1575 - 1585 Elizabeth
28. 1600 - 1610 Justine jr
29. 1625 - 1635 Felicity
30. 1650 - 1660 Penelope Cato LOVEGOOD
31. 1675 - 1685 Augustus
32. 1700 - 1710 Justinian
33. 1725 - 1735 Alcibiades
34. 1750 - 1760 Hector
35. 1775 - 1785 Achillies
36. 1800 - 1810 Fabian
37. 1825 - 1835 Tiberius
38. 1850 - 1860 Hadrian



39. 1875 - 1885 Septimius
40. 1900 - 1910 Adrian
41. 1925 - 1935 Plato
42. 1950 - 1960 Xenophilus
43. 1975 - 1985 LUNA

0. 900 - 910 ROWENA RAVENCLAW
1. 925 - 935 Helena Xerxes SLYTHERIN
2. 950 - 960 Eric
3. 975 - 985 Salazar
4. 1000 - 1010 Fabian
5. 1025 - 1035 Harold
6. 1050 - 1060 Edward
7. 1075 - 1085 Michelle
8. 1100 - 1110 Marie
9. 1125 - 1135 Lavender
10. 1150 - 1160 Rose
11. 1175 - 1185 Frederica
12. 1200 - 1210 Collette
13. 1225 - 1235 Calpernia
14. 1250 - 1260 Bertha
15. 1275 - 1285 Leanne
16. 1300 - 1310 Andromeda
17. 1325 - 1335 Sarah Raymond BONES
18. 1350 - 1360 Albert
19. 1375 - 1385 Jason
20. 1400 - 1410 Aaron
21. 1425 - 1435 Thomas
22. 1450 - 1460 Ariel
23. 1475 - 1485 Simone
24. 1500 - 1510 Tabatha
25. 1525 - 1535 Erica
26. 1550 - 1560 Gabrielle
27. 1575 - 1585 Hortence
28. 1600 - 1610 Marcia Edgar POTTER
29. 1625 - 1635 James
30. 1650 - 1660 Oliver
31. 1675 - 1685 Horace
32. 1700 - 1710 William
33. 1725 - 1735 Marta



34. 1750 - 1760 Anne
35. 1775 - 1785 Jessica
36. 1800 - 1810 Jane
37. 1825 - 1835 Suzanne
38. 1850 - 1860 Constance
39. 1875 - 1885 Roberta
40. 1900 - 1910 Minerva
41. 1925 - 1935 Miranda jr.
42. 1950 - 1960 Erin jr.
43. 1975 - 1985 HERMIONE

0. 900 - 910 SALAZAR SLYTHERIN
1. 925 - 935 Godric
2. 950 - 960 Sebastian
3. 975 - 985 Edgar
4. 1000 - 1010 Constantine\*
5. 1025 - 1035 Eirc
6. 1050 - 1060 Leif
7. 1075 - 1085 Rubeus
8. 1100 - 1110 Helen
9. 1125 - 1135 Pamela
10. 1150 - 1160 Lily
11. 1175 - 1185 Hortence
12. 1200 - 1210 Ellen
13. 1225 - 1235 Mary
14. 1250 - 1260 Angela Philo PEVERELLE
15. 1275 - 1285 Darius
16. 1300 - 1310 Ignotus
17. 1325 - 1335 Darcy
18. 1350 - 1360 Renee
19. 1375 - 1385 Teresa
20. 1400 - 1410 Jasmine
21. 1425 - 1435 Eunice
22. 1450 - 1460 Mary Robert POTTER
23. 1475 - 1485 John
24. 1500 - 1510 Daniel
25. 1525 - 1535 David
22. 1450 - 1460 William
23. 1475 - 1485 Albert
24. 1500 - 1510 Cygnus



25. 1525 - 1535 Pius
26. 1550 - 1560 George
27. 1575 - 1585 Sabastian
28. 1600 - 1610 Edgar
29. 1625 - 1635 James
30. 1650 - 1660 Oliver
31. 1675 - 1685 Horace
32. 1700 - 1710 William
33. 1725 - 1735 Louis
34. 1750 - 1760 Michael
35. 1775 - 1785 Richard
36. 1800 - 1810 Philip
37. 1825 - 1835 Raymond
38. 1850 - 1860 Harold
39. 1875 - 1885 Edgar
40. 1900 - 1910 Charlus
41. 1925 - 1935 Charles
42. 1950 - 1960 James
43. 1975 - 1985 HARRY

0. 900 - 910 GODERIC GRYFFINDOR

1. 925 - 935 Alfred
2. 950 - 960 Edward
3. 975 - 985 Edmund
4. 1000 - 1010 Harold
5. 1025 - 1035 Goderic
6. 1050 - 1060 Olga Horace LONGBOTTOM
7. 1075 - 1085 Edmund
8. 1100 - 1110 William
9. 1125 - 1135 Edward
10. 1150 - 1160 Edmund
11. 1175 - 1185 Richard
7. 1075 - 1085 Gustav
8. 1100 - 1110 Alice William BLACK
9. 1125 - 1135 Stephen
10. 1150 - 1160 Timothy
11. 1175 - 1185 Carl
12. 1200 - 1210 Sebastian
13. 1225 - 1235 Lawrence
14. 1250 - 1260 George



15. 1275 - 1285 Marsha
16. 1300 - 1310 Clarice Damian POTTER
17. 1325 - 1335 Sebastian
18. 1350 - 1360 Edward
19. 1375 - 1385 Harold
20. 1400 - 1410 Henry
21. 1425 - 1435 Richard
22. 1450 - 1460 Robert
23. 1475 - 1485 John
24. 1500 - 1510 Daniel
25. 1525 - 1535 David
22. 1450 - 1460 William
23. 1475 - 1485 Albert
24. 1500 - 1510 Cygnus
25. 1525 - 1535 Pius
26. 1550 - 1560 George
27. 1575 - 1585 Sabastian
28. 1600 - 1610 Edgar
29. 1625 - 1635 James
30. 1650 - 1660 Oliver
31. 1675 - 1685 Horace
32. 1700 - 1710 William
33. 1725 - 1735 Louis
34. 1750 - 1760 Michael
35. 1775 - 1785 Richard
36. 1800 - 1810 Philip
37. 1825 - 1835 Raymond
38. 1850 - 1860 Harold
39. 1875 - 1885 Edgar
40. 1900 - 1910 Charlus
41. 1925 - 1935 Charles
42. 1950 - 1960 James
43. 1975 - 1985 HARRY

0. 900 - 910 SALAZAR SLYTHERIN
1. 925 - 935 Godric
2. 950 - 960 Sebastian
3. 975 - 985 Edgar
4. 1000 - 1010 Harrod\*
5. 1025 - 1035 Alexander



6. 1050 - 1060 Frederick
7. 1075 - 1085 Charles
8. 1100 - 1110 John
9. 1125 - 1135 Edgar
10. 1150 - 1160 Severus
11. 1175 - 1185 Salazar
12. 1200 - 1210 Aphrodite Octavian PEVERELLE
13. 1225 - 1235 Julius
14. 1250 - 1260 Philo
15. 1275 - 1285 Darius
16. 1300 - 1310 Cadmus
17. 1325 - 1335 Pericles
18. 1350 - 1360 Marcus
19. 1375 - 1385 Anthony
20. 1400 - 1410 Elaine Proctor HASKELL
21. 1425 - 1435 Robert
22. 1450 - 1460 Richard
23. 1475 - 1485 Henry
24. 1500 - 1510 Edward
25. 1525 - 1535 Harold
22. 1450 - 1460 John
23. 1475 - 1485 Albert
24. 1500 - 1510 Alan
25. 1525 - 1535 Thomas
26. 1550 - 1560 Ignatius
27. 1575 - 1585 Deborah Edgar WEASLEY
28. 1600 - 1610 Samuel
29. 1625 - 1635 Draco
30. 1650 - 1660 Phineus
31. 1675 - 1685 Augustine
32. 1700 - 1710 Marcia Tamon GAUNT
33. 1725 - 1735 Carsius
34. 1750 - 1760 Morphin
35. 1775 - 1785 Malaces
36. 1800 - 1810 Fererin
37. 1825 - 1835 Tamoth
38. 1850 - 1860 Amon
39. 1875 - 1885 Marvolo
40. 1900 - 1910 Marope Tom RIDDLE



41. 1925 - 1935 Tom

A/N 3: NEWT and OWL scores for major characters:

ENGLISH SECTION, CLASS 88-2

CLARICE LILLIAN JAMESON

REAL AGE: 7

ASSIMILATED AGE: 13

LONDON, U.K.

I.C.W. CERTIFIED NASTILY EXHAUSTING WIZARDING TEST

Passing Grades:

O - Outstanding

E - Exceeds Expectations

A - Acceptable

Failing Grades:

P - Poor

D - Dreadful

T - Troll

HONORS:

H - Honors: Top Score on ICW in this examination year.

WD - With Distinction: Top 1% of all international exams.

COURSE THEORY PRACTICAL OVERALL

ARITHMANCY: O O O

ANCIENT RUNES: O O O

CHARMS: O+ O+ O+ WD

DEFENSE: O O+ O+ WD

HERBOLOGY: O O O

MIND MAGIC: O O O

POTIONS: O O+ O

RITUAL MAGIC: O+ O+ O+ WD

TRANSFIGURATION: O+ O+ O+ WD



CLASS RANK: 3/428

NOTES:

SHIFTING: ICW Full Qualification.  
APPARITION: ICW Full Qualification.  
PORTKEY: ICW Licensed Maker.  
PATRONUS: Doe  
ANIMAGUS:  
COMMON: Raven  
COMBAT: Dire Wolf

---

ENGLISH SECTION, CLASS 88-2  
HARRY JAMES POTTER  
REAL AGE: 8  
ASSIMILATED AGE: 14  
LONDON, U.K.  
I.C.W. CERTIFIED NASTILY EXHAUSTING WIZARDING TEST

Passing Grades:

O - Outstanding  
E - Exceeds Expectations  
A - Acceptable

Failing Grades:

P - Poor  
D - Dreadful  
T - Troll

HONORS:

H - Honors: Top Score on ICW in this examination year.  
WD - With Distinction: Top 1% of all international exams.

COURSE THEORY PRACTICAL OVERALL



ARITHMANCY: O+ O O  
ANCIENT RUNES: O+ O+ O+ WD  
CHARMS: O+ O+ O+ WD  
DEFENSE: O+ O+ O+ H  
HERBOLOGY: O O O  
MIND MAGIC: O O O  
POTIONS: O+ O+ O+ H  
RITUAL MAGIC: O O O  
TRANSFIGURATION: O O O

CLASS RANK: 2/428

NOTES:

SHIFTING: ICW Full Qualification.  
APPARITION: ICW Full Qualification.  
PORTKEY: ICW Licensed Maker.  
PATRONUS: Stag  
ANIMAGUS:  
COMMON: Eagle  
COMBAT: Gryffin

---

ENGLISH SECTION, CLASS 88-2  
HERMIONE JANE GRANGER  
REAL AGE: 9  
ASSIMILATED AGE: 15  
LONDON, U.K.  
I.C.W. CERTIFIED NASTILY EXHAUSTING WIZARDING TEST

Passing Grades:

O - Outstanding  
E - Exceeds Expectations  
A - Acceptable

Failing Grades:



P - Poor  
D - Dreadful  
T - Troll

#### HONORS:

H - Honors: Top Score on ICW in this examination year.  
WD - With Distinction: Top 1% of all international exams.

#### COURSE THEORY PRACTICAL OVERALL

ARITHMANCY: O+ O+ O+ H  
ANCIENT RUNES: O+ O+ O+ WD  
CHARMS: O+ O+ O+ WD  
DEFENSE: O+ O+ O+ WD  
HERBOLOGY: O O O  
MIND MAGIC: O O O  
POTIONS: O+ O O  
RITUAL MAGIC: O O O  
TRANSFIGURATION: O+ O+ O+ H

CLASS RANK: 1/428

#### NOTES:

SHIFTING: ICW Full Qualification.  
APPARITION: ICW Full Qualification.  
PORTKEY: ICW Licensed Maker.  
PATRONUS: Otter  
ANIMAGUS:  
COMMON: House Cat.  
COMBAT: Bengal Tiger.

---

ENGLISH SECTION, CLASS 89-3  
NYMPHADORA "DORA" TONKS  
REAL AGE: 15



ASSIMILATED AGE: 17  
NOTTINGHAM, U.K.  
I.C.W. CERTIFIED ORDINARY WIZARDING LEVELS

Passing Grades:

O - Outstanding  
E - Exceeds Expectations  
A - Acceptable

Failing Grades:

P - Poor  
D - Dreadful  
T - Troll

HONORS:

H - Honors: Top Score on ICW in this examination year.  
WD - With Distinction: Top 1% of all international exams.

OTHER:

N - No exam offered.

COURSE THEORY PRACTICAL OVERALL

ARITHMANCY: EE N EE  
ANCIENT RUNES: O N O  
CHARMS: EE O O  
DEFENSE: O O+ O+ WD  
HERBOLOGY: EE EE EE  
MIND MAGIC: O O O  
POTIONS: EE O O  
RITUAL MAGIC: O+ O+ O+ WD  
TRANSFIGURATION: O O+ O  
ZOOLOGY O N O

CLASS RANK: 87/467



---

ENGLISH SECTION, CLASS 89-3

NYMPHADORA "DORA" TONKS

REAL AGE: 15

ASSIMILATED AGE: 19

NOTTINGHAM, U.K.

I.C.W. CERTIFIED NASTILY EXHAUSTING WIZARDING TEST

Passing Grades:

O - Outstanding

E - Exceeds Expectations

A - Acceptable

Failing Grades:

P - Poor

D - Dreadful

T - Troll

HONORS:

H - Honors: Top Score on ICW in this examination year.

WD - With Distinction: Top 1% of all international exams.

COURSE THEORY PRACTICAL OVERALL

ARITHMANCY: EE EE EE

ANCIENT RUNES: EE EE EE

CHARMS: O+ O+ O+ WD

DEFENSE: O+ O+ O+ WD

HERBOLOGY: EE EE EE

MIND MAGIC: O O O

POTIONS: EE O O

RITUAL MAGIC: O O O

TRANSFIGURATION: EE O O

CLASS RANK: 68/458



## NOTES:

SHIFTING: ICW Full Qualification.  
APPARITION: ICW Full Qualification.  
PORTKEY: ICW Licensed Maker.  
PATRONUS: Dog  
ANIMAGUS: Metamorph - incompatible.

---

ENGLISH SECTION, CLASS 89-2  
SUSAN MARIE BONES  
REAL AGE: 8  
ASSIMILATED AGE: 12  
LONDON, U.K.  
I.C.W. CERTIFIED ORDINARY WIZARDING LEVELS

### Passing Grades:

O - Outstanding  
E - Exceeds Expectations  
A - Acceptable

### Failing Grades:

P - Poor  
D - Dreadful  
T - Troll

### HONORS:

H - Honors: Top Score on ICW in this examination year.  
WD - With Distinction: Top 1% of all international exams.

### OTHER:

N - No exam offered.



## COURSE THEORY PRACTICAL OVERALL

ARITHMANCY: EE N EE  
ANCIENT RUNES: O N O  
CHARMS: O O O  
DEFENSE: EE O O  
HERBOLOGY: EE EE EE  
MIND MAGIC: O O O  
POTIONS: O O O  
RITUAL MAGIC: EE EE EE  
TRANSFIGURATION: EE O O

CLASS RANK: 38/417

---

ENGLISH SECTION, CLASS 89-3  
NEVILLE CYRUS LONGBOTTOM  
REAL AGE: 8  
ASSIMILATED AGE: 11  
COLNE, LANCASHIRE, U.K.  
I.C.W. CERTIFIED ORDINARY WIZARDING LEVELS

### Passing Grades:

O - Outstanding  
E - Exceeds Expectations  
A - Acceptable

### Failing Grades:

P - Poor  
D - Dreadful  
T - Troll

### HONORS:

H - Honors: Top Score on ICW in this examination year.  
WD - With Distinction: Top 1% of all international exams.



OTHER:

N - No exam offered.

COURSE THEORY PRACTICAL OVERALL

ARITHMANCY: EE N EE

ANCIENT RUNES: O N O

CHARMS: O O O

DEFENSE: O+ O+ O+ WD

HERBOLOGY: O+ O+ O+ H

MIND MAGIC: O O O

POTIONS: O+ O+ O+ WD

RITUAL MAGIC: O O O

TRANSFIGURATION: O O+ O

ZOOLOGY EE N EE

CLASS RANK: 12/417

---

ENGLISH SECTION, CLASS 89-2

LUNA CELESTE LOVEGOOD

REAL AGE: 8

ASSIMILATED AGE: 11

OTTERY ST. CATCHPOLE, DEVON, U.K.

I.C.W. CERTIFIED ORDINARY WIZARDING LEVELS

Passing Grades:

O - Outstanding

E - Exceeds Expectations

A - Acceptable

Failing Grades:

P - Poor

D - Dreadful



T - Troll

HONORS:

H - Honors: Top Score on ICW in this examination year.

WD - With Distinction: Top 1% of all international exams.

OTHER:

N - No exam offered.

COURSE THEORY PRACTICAL OVERALL

ARITHMANCY: O+ N O+ WD

ANCIENT RUNES: O N O

CHARMS: O O O

DEFENSE: O+ O+ O+ WD

HERBOLOGY: O O O

MIND MAGIC: O O O

POTIONS: O+ O O

RITUAL MAGIC: O+ O+ O+ WD

TRANSFIGURATION: O O+ O

ZOOLOGY O+ N O+ H

CLASS RANK: 2/417



## CHAPTER THIRTY-EIGHT: THE PROGRAM

THURSDAY, AUGUST 3rd 1989 - POTTER HOUSE, LONDON, U.K.

The Grangers, the children and the others returned to London just a few days before on August 2nd. The Grangers and the children left for their Summer Holiday early the next morning. They went to France and specifically for Paris. Hermione had been there before, but neither Harry nor Clarice had gone. Hermione planned to practice her French. She had taken four years of it at the Watanabe School and after passing her proficiency examinations, she started on Chinese this summer, Mandarin Chinese to be exact. She had just passed that proficiency at the end of the last term, not that it would help her at all in Paris.

Both Harry and Clarice were keen on going. They had never been to the continent before and having read so much about it really wanted to see it for themselves. Harry had passed his proficiency exam in Spanish at the end of his first Summer and had just passed a new one in Arabic. Clarice could now add Russian and German to her linguistic skills. All three were now fluent in Japanese as was Rose Granger. They were told early on that the younger you are when you learn a new language, the easier that becomes. The same was true in that the more languages you could speak, the easier it was to learn a new one.

It was not so much a part of some kind of master plan either on their part or any of the adults they knew, including Sensei. It was just one of the many educational opportunities available at their school so they pursued it and would continue to pursue it, schedule permitting of course.

The Grangers departure did not leave the large house empty. Remus and Sirius lived there and, for all practical purposes so did Sophie. Remus had been busy and just missed the Grangers when he finally came home that morning.

"How was Japan," Remus asked Sirius and Sophie.



"That was an amazing place," Sophie said. "Almost wish - no I do wish I could have gone there."

Remus looked at Sirius.

"It's embarrassing in a way," Sirius said.

"How so?"

"They teach far more there than here. And I'd add that their faculty is better overall. Don't get me wrong. McGonagall, Flitwick and Sprout could easily teach there. Maybe even Slughorn. But not one of our Defense teachers from Hogwarts would have been able to and let's not even talk about Binns.

"On the other hand, the kids are so damn busy all the time. You know how hard they worked the last year on their projects and with their friends?"

Remus nodded.

"That was a holiday for them! All of them are nose to the grindstone six days a week! I made it a point to make sure my kids - and I consider them my kids, odd that - I made sure they kept up in their classes so that when they had a day off, they took a day off and could act like normal kids for a day."

"Not much pranking then?"

Sirius shook his head. "At least not on school days. They really didn't have the time. But when they did ... look out! The better ones would have wiped the floor with us, Moony."

"That good?"

"It's more a question of how much magic they learn and how quickly."

"And how was being the babysitter?"



“There really was not all that much to do. The Prefects handle most things in the dorms. I was there more as a tutor in many ways. Besides, the kids were generally well behaved when they were required to be. It would have been bloody boring after the first Term. Two Terms per Session, five Sessions for the Summer, no fun at all. And as most the kids were truly kids and not teenagers, didn’t have to deal with couples in broom closets for the most part.”

“So what did you do?”

“Studied.”

“Get out!”

“As a Magical Minder, I was allowed to pursue a Mastery.”

“Did you?”

Sirius nodded. “Took an abbreviated Defense one. Only two terms instead of the usual six thanks to Auror training.”

“Why did you do that? I mean, is their defense training different?”

“It’s not law enforcement. They teach combat and not just magical stuff. Their defense masters includes training with muggle weapons: pistols, infantry rifles, marksmanship, demolition and such. Blowing stuff up is actually kind of fun! I also studied the eastern martial arts. Great hand to hand stuff with all kinds of magical dueling potential. And they teach far more about what we call the Dark Arts than they do here even in Auror training. They don’t teach the how, so much as the what and how to counter it.”

“Wow! Is that all you learned?”

Sirius shook his head. “I am now an I.C.W. Certified Curse Breaker.”

“Bloody hell! What do you intend to do with that?”

“Got any openings in Office W?”



Remus looked at his friend. "They're always looking for talent."

"Good. 'Cause as soon as Sophie and I get back from our honeymoon, I believe I'd be inclined to want a respectable job."

"You two set a date yet?"

"Yep!"

"October 15th," Sophie said beaming.

"So soon?"

"Hardly," Sirius said. "We've been a couple for over five years our time. And I love her more now than the day we left. She is the most important thing in my life right now, with you and the kids a close second. I'm done being the bachelor. So the sooner the better."

"Me too," Sophie said with a blush. "I'm tired of 'living in sin' as it were. Although I don't see it that way. We would have married sooner, but I'd like my family to be there and my friends and Sirius's friends as well. Especially you, Remus."

"I need a Best Man, Moony," Sirius added. "It's either you or Harry and he's too young really."

"I'd be honored," Remus replied. "Now about the kids..."

Sirius told them about how Harry, Hermione and Clarice did. But he did not stop there. He also told him about the other ten students, all of which were under his charge as school. Seven were now post N.E.W.T. levels and three had their O.W.L.s. All had done quite well.

"Interesting," Remus said. "Back to the Kids. They really have Masteries?"

Sirius nodded.

"How will they maintain proficiency?"



“For Harry and Hermione it’s mostly easy. They can train here for the most part. ‘Bout the only thing they cannot do here is firearms training.”

“Firearms?”

“Proficiency was part of that program. While they were trained in several different weapons, for marksmanship training they used a Sig-Sauer P226 re-chambered by the school for 6.4mm ammunition. It lacks the range or stopping power of a larger gun, but they use that for target practice, not shooting bad guys. The kids are still a bit too small for standard 9mm guns. They can handle the smaller caliber quite well. They also used a compact version of the American M-16, again because it uses a smaller round than most military rifles in use today. This poses a problem, as those guns are illegal here. I guess we could see about a hunting rifle or some such...”

“Or I could talk to my boss,” Remus said. “I don’t know about a modified P226, but we do have a range for the agents.”

“I’m not so sure...”

“Sirius, you and I both know Office W is interested in Harry at least. They’ll probably be interested in many of their friends in a few years time.”

“If not sooner,” Sirius said. “Jason Evans and two of his friends are set to begin their final year. They’re heading back to Japan next summer to earn a degree and try and pick up a Mastery or two. Still, the idea of the muggle government and Harry...”

“Sirius listen. Harry has allowed me to tell my colleagues anything we know or suspect, including anything Sensei told us that is still possible or fact. They know Voldemort is not truly dead and can come back. They also know it won’t happen until 1994 or 1995 at the earliest. They know both sides consider Harry important, even critical, in the coming struggle.

“We can’t trust Dumbledore with Harry. We know that. The man wanted a martyr and that tends to go bad for the martyr. We can’t



trust the Ministry with him either. There are only two or three people in that place I trust at all, and only two of them are in a position to help Harry if need be. One is Millicent Bagnold. But I would not count on her being around indefinitely. She's been minister for nine years and has been with the ministry for over seventy. The other is Amelia Bones. If Millie has her way, Amelia would be her replacement. But we know how that works. Fair bet we will get a weak willed bureaucrat who is well above average on the corruption scale. You know the key votes on the Wizengamot want a pliable minister, one who will support their agenda for the right amount of money.

"Half or more of the Death Eaters who survived the last war are free. A few have seats in that body. A fair few actually avoided any suspicion. Just about any candidate other than Amelia could be a Death Eater. Even if they are not, the Death Eaters financial backers are still out there. We know what happened the last time. The Ministry buried its head in the sand until it was truly too late. I'd bet it will be almost the same the next time around.

"So we can rule out Dumbledore and his Order of the Phoenix. He cannot be trusted. The Ministry is out because they cannot be trusted. But we know Harry will be in the thick of it from the opening salvo until the bitter end, however it turns out. He cannot do that alone. That leaves..."

"The Muggles," Sirius said. "Still, what makes them any different really?"

"Aside from the fact they don't want to control our world? The three factions in our world all want that. The Muggles don't. They would still prefer for us to handle our problems ourselves, but are not above giving us a hand if we ask for it. They offered both the Ministry and Dumbledore support the last time and were repeatedly rebuffed. Because the war had spread into their world, they had to take some action. Had we accepted their support back then, Voldemort's movement might never have really gotten started."

"What kind of support?"



“When the time come financial, logistical, information, that sort of thing.”

“Sounds like they want an army of sorts,” Sirius said. It was hardly a surprise to him as he had been thinking along similar lines for a while. Learning combat defense, strategy and tactics tended to do that.

“Notionally that’s a fair analogy,” Remus said. “They want a magical force that can deal with the Pureblood Supremacist movement and is loyal to Her Majesty’s Government, but not a part of it.”

“Why not?”

“Plausible deniability,” Remus smirked. “It will be an all magical force independent of the Ministry and Dumbledore but for all appearances unaffiliated with any other government.”

“Why do I sense your hand in this, Moony?”

“Me?” Remus said with mock innocence. “Me? I’m just an innocent Marauder.”

“Who’s trying to build an army of children to fight Death Eaters,” Sophie added. She had learned a lot in Japan, most notably Mind Magic, so she was now in on the ‘Secret.’ She could not see Sensei and resigned herself to the fact that she might never see him. But she knew about him and knew Sirius could. “They’re just children!”

“Physically, you are correct,” Sirius said. “Magically, they are the best they can be given their age. But from an experience standpoint, you can add eight years to their current ages. You were there, Soph. We were there for over four years by the count of days. Since Gringotts goes by count of days, Harry and Hermione are legally adults. Clarice will be next summer. Because she passed her N.E.W.T.s, she is free from the restrictions against underage wizardry.

“And do not underestimate them, especially Harry. You remember me telling you that Sensei and Harry were the exact same person until May of last year?”



Sophie nodded.

"The exact same, down to the memories, hopes, dreams, thoughts, scars and injuries. That all changed for our Harry. Sensei's Harry grew up malnourished and it stunted his growth both physically and magically. That should have been dealt with when he arrived at Hogwarts, but it was not. True, he ate better, but the damage he suffered from his Aunt and Uncle was never fixed. He was a good four to six inches shorter than he was meant to be. He probably suffered a similar degradation in his magical potential.

"That Harry never trained as hard with his magic as our Harry does. He never went to the Watanabe School, never attained a single Masters, never went to Secondary School. He did not even know about magic until he was eleven! He was at best an average student at Hogwarts. Failed two of his O.W.L.s, although who really cared about divination or History of Magic really."

"Those who fail to learn the lessons of history are doomed to repeat them," Remus interjected.

"Agreed. And if you pass your O.W.L.s, you know about the Statute of Secrecy and that it is not wise to piss off a Goblin and little else."

"Point taken."

"Anyway, that Harry - the stunted and underachieving one - well, at thirteen he cast a Patronus that drove off over one hundred dementors!"

"Bloody hell," Remus said, "there might be one wizard in a million who could do that!"

"And this Harry was the same as that Harry. Except he is highly trained and has been treated for what he suffered. He will be one powerful wizard as a teen. And it's not because of the Watanabe School. He will know loads of magic because of that and have mastered more magic than most every witch or wizard in Britain - aside from those who go to that school, maybe. Do not confuse him - or Clarice or Hermione for that matter - for normal children. They are



anything but that and when the time comes, should it come, I would not want to be a Death Eater if they come knocking.”

“Sorry Siri,” Sophie said.

“For what? To an extent I agree with you. They should be allowed to be kids. Still, I really do not want to relive the last war. Even if the next one never happens, it is prudent to be prepared just in case. It has been said by many a man in many ways over countless centuries: in peace, prepare for war.”

“I actually meant seeing them as little children,” Sophie said. “Clarice is actually quite a good Healer. It’s a pity she can’t do anything with that outside of school.”

“Even if they are not truly innocent children and are highly trained, I doubt they could get a job,” Sirius said.

“Not in the Wizarding world at any rate,” Remus agreed. “The muggle world - well, Office W might be willing to look the other way in regards to the child labor laws.”

“What are you talking about?”

“Mike Evans had two of his kids at that school. He was there at the end, remember?”

Sirius nodded. Mike Evans was Remus’s boss or immediate superior.

“When he got back, he told me that during the last war, Office W tried to recruit trained witches and wizards into a combat arm. While Office W ran all the ops against Death Eaters, there were too few of them to engage more than a handful of the enemy at a time. The larger Ops were performed by the S.A.S., all Muggles and all of whom had to be told about magic. This had drawbacks.”

“Aside from the obvious issues of secrecy?” Sirius asked.

Remus nodded. “They could not use magic. They could not throw up anti-apparition or similar wards over a target. And, it was next to



impossible for them to take the enemy alive - bullets and such don't stun to well."

"You're NOT thinking of turning kids into some kind of soldiers," Sophie protested.

"I am certain the Big Boss would take issue were that the idea," Remus said. "Not, what we are hoping to do is have the government invest in the future, as it were."

"And just what does that mean?"

"The training and education the kids received in Japan is first rate. The magical education here in Britain is pretty good, but not as good. A lot of the differences have to do with the extreme restrictions the Ministry places upon knowledge. As I understand it, the schools here teach to the barest minimum of the I.C.W. standards. And believe me, there are those in the Ministry - probably former Death Eaters if you ask me - who still think we teach too much.

"The biggest problem we had during the last war was a lack of qualified witches and wizards. I don't mean lack of N.E.W.T. levels, I mean a lack of knowledge and skills that could be used against the enemy. The Auror Corps accepted less than one percent of the young people finishing school. This was mainly because very few finished school with adequate skills to complete Auror training. You can train a Muggle soldier in as little as six months and get a very good soldier from that. Magic takes more going in and more to complete combat training. Nature of the beast, really. Combat magic is incredibly difficult and is far beyond most young people's abilities to learn quickly if they never learned the basics to begin with. That is a direct result of the Ministry's restrictions.

"And it was not like the Ministry was willing to invest the resources to improve the capabilities of the Auror Corps. Heaven forbid the greedy bastards actually use the Ministry funds for something constructive, rather than redecorating their bloody homes. We could not field an effective force to combat the Death Eaters because our schools failed to provide us with the raw materials and our Ministry refused to either fix that problem or find a way to train potential recruits. Basically, if



you did what was necessary to get through school, you could never become an Auror.

“Add to that the Hogwarts bias and ...”

“Hogwarts bias?” Sirius asked.

“The Ministry is dominated by Hogwarts graduates,” Remus said. “A Hogwarts grad can get a job there just by showing up practically. The other kids? St. Mungo’s is not so biased and neither is Gringotts. But, the Auror Corps is almost entirely made up of former Hogwarts students. Every Department Head is a former Hogwarts student. There are four hundred or so students at Hogwarts and it is one of but six magical schools in the British Isles. The other five have round six hundred students each.”

“Day schools,” Sirius said with more than a hint of derision.

“Indeed. St. George’s in London and Preston Academy near York are the schools that educate the majority of English magical children. St. Andrews near Edinburgh handles the Scots, St. Patrick’s the Irish and Queen Anne’s the Welsh. The wizarding economy is a product of those schools. The government is a product of Hogwarts. Worse, the Death Eaters were almost entirely Hogwarts and the Order of the Phoenix was as well. The average wizard would not be keen on fighting in a war that was mostly between Hogwarts families, which was why they did not. Throw in the fact that most were not trained to do so and you can see why we almost lost the last time.”

This was not common knowledge and it was all new to Sophie. Sirius, on the other hand, had been an Auror late in the war. While he had not put it all together, he was aware of these general facts. Apparently, the Muggle MI-5 had put this all together and long before the war had ended as well.

“So what’s MI-5 planning,” Sirius asked.

“Right now, it’s just Mike Evans, David Greengrass and myself. We are working on a proposal.”



“And?”

“Send as many kids as we can to that school; a true cross section of our country, not just Hogwarts and St. George’s. It takes but two summer sessions for them to take a kid from no magical knowledge to Auror or better. When the next war comes, we could have a huge talent pool to draw upon to create a counter to the Death Eaters.”

“They’re just kids,” Sophie began.

“Now,” Remus replied. “Right now they are. But according to Sensei, this war will not begin until about a year after Voldemort returns to a corporeal form. Summer 1996 at the earliest. The seven kids who attained their N.E.W.T.s this summer will all be adults by then. Harry, Hermione and Clarice will legally be adults in our world by then.

“If our plan gets approval, MI-5 will foot the bill, or at least a major part of it. It will also seek out students from the schools not already represented. It will encourage and finance as necessary the kids ‘Weekend Warriors’ during the rest of the year as it can come up with better facilities than this place, as good as this is.

“I would and have also recommended that aside from students 16 year of age or older who have attended the Japanese school, all others should return to their schools as if nothing happened.”

“Why?” Sirius asked.

“We need to include Muggleborns,” Remus replied. “The only ones in the ‘Program’ now were friends of the Evans family from school. Unless we can access the Muggleborn lists, we need to be able to recruit from the schools. That means we need students there who can find us talented Muggleborns and others to add to the program.”

“Okay, and if they find talent?”

“The kids and any younger magical siblings over age six would be invited to attend Harry’s ‘Weekend Warriors.’ If they stick with it, then next summer we send them to Japan.”



“And can Harry handle a lot more members?”

“No,” Remus said. “But it’s not just Harry, Hermione and Clarice anymore, is it? There are ten others who are at least as qualified as they were last year. Given that resource, I figure the club could handle between a hundred and fifty and two hundred, assuming we can find that many.”

“Doubt this house could handle that many at once.”

Remus nodded. “Office W has an underused training facility outside of London that can. It is heavily warded. Better than most pureblood manors, truth be told. Perhaps only Hogwarts and Gringotts are better protected. Should be an ideal location.”

“And what about their Muggle trips? That was a huge part of Harry’s group last year.”

“Those can be arranged.”

“When?”

“We make our presentation to our boss on Monday. If it is approved in concept, we can probably find a few more members for the club by the time the kids hold their first meeting after they return from holiday. Funding for the school may take longer, but he have until May for that.”

Sirius thought about this for a while. There was a gleam in his eye as the old prankster was awakened. “You do realize you’ll be undermining both the Ministry of Magic and magical education to some extent, don’t you?”

Remus nodded. “And gaining a generation of witches and wizards who we hope won’t sit and hide should the dark times return.”

“A prank is a prank, even for noble causes,” Sirius said.

“That thought had crossed my mind too.”



"I'd ask to be in but..."

"Ah, but you are a key player."

"H-how?"

"You are currently unemployed with ample free time. You also have spend a full summer at the school and are a fully qualified Auror. Who better than you to extol the virtues of that school."

"You mean....?"

"We want you to be there to answer any questions about the school. As you are considering joining Office W, consider this a pre-interview interview."

---

Sensei was arguably enjoying himself as much as an invisible avatar could. He was with Harry and the others for their trip to Paris. It was obvious to him that the kids were having a wonderful time. Sensei could swear that Harry and Hermione held hands the whole time, although he knew that was not true as they did sleep in separate beds and neither accompanied the other into a rest room. Still, it was endearing.

Each kid had something they liked about this city. For Clarice, who was the family shutterbug having been given her first camera before her first trip to Japan, she loved the architecture and vistas. She was the most excited by their trip to the Eifel tower, at least the top of it. Hermione less so. Apparently a fear of heights was an inherent characteristic of the girl and only by hanging on to Harry for dear life - or so it seemed - was she able to relax and enjoy the view. For Hermione, the Louvre was the highlight of their stay. For Harry, it was the food. Regardless, Sensei was pleased that they were enjoying themselves.

Sensei, however, was pondering this upcoming year. Given how far he had overshot his original time target, he knew there was a lot that



could be done to improve, if not yet fully change the future. He had already helped people he cared about in his past timeline to some extent. Neville and Luna had friends and were thriving as he recalled from their school. Hermione and Harry, well he was sure this time they would see they were meant to be together. There was no way his sister would die in those accursed camps this time. Sirius was not just a free man, but engaged.

Harry was friends with three of the Weasleys and Ginny was not fawning over him this time. She saw Harry as a kind of big brother - one who did not pick on her or try to prank her. But to Ginny, he still was a boy. At the 'Weekend Warrior' meetings, she saw boys as only being useful when talking about Quidditch, otherwise she hung out with Luna and the Greengrass sisters. Harry was a great friend. But definitely not boyfriend material. Everybody knew that particular position was reserved to Hermione and nobody dared question it.

Fred and George were still Gred and Forge. They were learning loads of stuff and Sensei could only chuckle at the mayhem these two could cause once they started Hogwarts. The surprise from the Weasley family was Percy. He, apparently, had declared a prank war against all of Hogwarts last year. He set a record for house points lost and for nights in detention and was unrepentant, mainly because whatever house points he lost getting caught - and as he was proud of his pranks, he almost always was caught - he earned back in the classroom. Basically, Percy had cost his House no points overall. The twins practically worshiped him as according to Bill and Charlie, he was outdoing them in the prank department and yet would probably make Prefect Fifth Year if he turned over the Weasley franchise to the twins. Ron was the only Weasley Sensei had heard little about. Apparently, he was still "grounded," although just before the kids headed off to Japan it had been said Ron actually managed to read a big book with no pictures and no help.

Harry, Hermione and Clarice had been involved in their own research projects while at school aimed at solving some of the problems they saw and learned of from their discussions with Sensei. One was the means with which they could destroy a Horcrux, hoping there might be an eastern technique similar to the one used on Harry the year before that could avoid the use of Fiendfyre or the need to find and



kill a basilisk. The other was finding a cure, if one was available for Neville's parents.

Within weeks of the deaths of Harry and Clarice's parents, Neville's parents Frank and Alice had been attacked by four Death Eaters who had managed to escape justice. They were seeking information about their Master, Voldemort who they believed was not dead, but rather imprisoned by their enemies. They tortured the two Aurors for hours using the Cruciatus Curse, a nasty spell designed for but one purpose, inflicting excruciating pain. According to the Healers at St. Mungo's the torture had driven them both into permanent insanity and they had spent the best part of the last eight years in the permanent spell damage ward staring at the ceiling. Neville and his Gran (Frank's mother) visited them frequently, but not once had the couple ever responded to anyone.

Early in her studies to become a Healer, Clarice had found a problem. While it was well documented that the Cruciatus Curse could render a person catatonic, it took days or weeks to reach that point. The Longbottoms had only been missing a few hours. Moreover, the spell's effects lasted a few weeks at most, at which point the patient would either recover or die. There had never been a case like the Longbottoms associated with that curse before. Clarice immediately suspected a misdiagnosis and asked Harry and Hermione, then in their Defense Masters, to help find a curse or curse that could do that to a person so that she might find a cure.

It turned out that the two projects crossed paths. There were three ancient curses that could have caused the Longbottoms' condition, two of which could be cured and the third should have led to their deaths by now. While Clarice worked on learning the cures to the other two, Hermione and Harry were intrigued by the third. It was a curse invented in China in the Third Century B.C.E. specifically to destroy horcruxes.

In the Third Century B.C.E., the Kingdom of Qin embarked upon wars of conquest against its neighbors. For decades, their armies were the scourge of the world and nation after nation fell before them until all of what was then China became unified under the new Emperor Shihuang Di in 221 B.C.E. Shihuang Di was a warrior, not a politician



and was a tyrant. After three failed assassination attempts, he commissioned the wizards of his realm to find him magic that would grant him immortality.

Two fields of magic caught the eye of the emperor. One was alchemy, which took off under his patronage, yet failed to produce results and would lead to his death in 210 B.C.E. (His Court Alchemist had noted that a corpse exposed to mercury did not decay, so began dosing his emperor with a potion made from that poison.)

The alchemists did not promise quick results saying it might take decades or longer. They were off by over a thousand years. It was not until the 14th Century that Nicholas Flamel invented the illusive Philosopher's Stone and Elixir of Life, a secret he never revealed. Chinese alchemists would invent gunpowder and the Europeans included some of the greatest minds in Muggle science including Leonardo Da Vinci and most notably the mathematician and father of modern Physics, Sir Isaac Newton. In the West, Alchemy became the Muggle science of Chemistry. But that is another tale.

The other field was Necromancy. Considered the darkest of arts even in the east, the practitioners used death and the dead in their magics. A feared Necromancer named Zhou Xe was said to have invented the Horcrux or something almost identical for the Emperor. He proved to the Emperor it worked by having himself beheaded and then brought back to life by his apprentice Li Huan. Unfortunately, Zhou Xe could not make a horcrux for the Emperor and was beheaded yet again. This time, Li Huan was commissioned to find a way to destroy the Horcrux. He came up with a spell that destroyed magic. Destroy the magic protecting the soul and it is released. It required a stave to cast as no one wizard was powerful enough to cast it with their own magic, but it worked. Zhou Xe's horcrux was destroyed. Li Huan's reward was to have the spell cast upon him. It was said it did not kill him, but he was rendered in a condition not unlike the Longbottoms.

Li Huan's spell could destroy a horcrux! This excited all three children. But for Clarice, she ruled it out as the curse that fell the Longbottoms. It required a stave and was Chinese magic, two things they doubted the Death Eaters would know. Moreover, they doubted Voldemort would tolerate any of his minions knowing magic that could destroy



his horcruxes. The other problem with Li Huan's spell was there was no cure. It was as if you had your soul sucked out and once gone, it could never be restored.

"But this doesn't make sense," Hermione complained. "Li Huan's spell destroys the soul and can destroy a horcrux, but does not kill. Yet the Killing Curse destroys the soul too, doesn't it? Yet with Li Huan's spell anyone can destroy a horcrux, but only the maker of one can do so with the killing curse."

"Read it again, Hermione," Harry said. "The Killing Curse releases the soul, it does not destroy it. It seems to affect the life magic that binds the soul to a person. Since both the soul is gone and the magic as well, the body dies. But with Lu Huan, the soul is destroyed before any further damage is done. It's like the Dementor's Kiss."

"Still..."

"Can you think of any other explanation?"

"There has to be one!"

"Is it relevant?"

"It is if it means we can find a counter for the Killing Curse!" And Hermione's new and ultimately long term project was born.

The other two curses Clarice and the others found were both ancient, but wand based and western in origin and had known cures. The children had returned from Japan with a means to destroy Horcruxes and maybe cure the Longbottoms. But Sensei was still concerned.

True, those two tasks were high on his list of things to do sooner rather than later, but there was another tragedy looming. He hoped he could see to it that it was prevented, but could not see how.

In his time line, Luna's mother Jasmine was destined to die in the next year. She was a spell crafter and one of her spells went horribly wrong. Luna had watched helplessly as her mother died before her eyes. This had drastically hurt the poor girl. The problem was, Sensei



knew that this event would happen when Luna was nine. She was to turn nine in September of this year. Unfortunately, that's all Sensei knew. Sometime in the year following Luna's ninth birthday, Jasmine would die unless something could be done to prevent it. Sensei had no idea what that something could be. It was the point the pondered over the days and he was no closer to solving this puzzle. There had to be a way!



## CHAPTER THIRTY-NINE: THE LAST WAR

SATURDAY, AUGUST 19th, 1989 - POTTER HOUSE, LONDON, U.K.

Harry, Hermione and Clarice had returned from their holiday in France only a couple of days earlier. They had a wonderful time even if they were too young to buy another wand. The three of them wondered what they would be doing this year. At the very least, they knew they would probably have a chance to destroy one of the Horcruxes, the one in the vault and they planned to get to that task the next week. Beyond that, there was the Weekend Warriors who would begin meeting again after almost two months while they and the ten others had been in Japan and they had been on Holiday.

Excluding themselves, there were thirty Weekend Warriors. Ten were now Watanabe Students and had attained at least their O.W.L.s, in the case of Susan Bones, Neville and Luna. The other seven had their N.E.W.T.s already. Those ten were now known in Harry's mind as Watanabe Year 1989 and many were slated to attend through the summer of 1992. They now ranged in age from eight years old to seventeen. Luna would turn nine in less than a month and Harry's cousin Jason Evans and his two friends were all seventeen and were, last he heard, debating whether they would go back for their final year. Seven of Year 1989 were in school already. Of those seven, only Dora Tonks was a Hogwarts student having finished her fourth year in Hufflepuff House. As Susan, Neville and Luna were all slated for Hogwarts, that meant Year '89 had Seven St. George's students and four Hogwarts. Harry, Hermione and Clarice were Watanabe Year 1988 and would complete the full program of studies in the summer of 1991, before any of them were scheduled to attend magical school here in Britain.

Year 1990, those who would begin the Watanabe School next summer also had ten "members" including the Weasley twins. Two had finished their second year at St. Georges. Five would begin magical school very soon. The twins and Alicia Spinnet would start Hogwarts on September 1st. Two others would start St. Georges on Monday, August 28th. The remaining three would not be expected to start St. George's until August of next year.



The last group from the last year was Watanabe year 1991. This group included the youngest of Harry and Clarice's Evans cousins, the Greengrass sisters and Ginny Weasley. They ranged in age from seven to nine and were scheduled to start the Watanabe School the summer of 1991. The Evans twins were the only St. George's future students in this group. All but two of the rest were certain for Hogwarts. The last two, the Patil twins, did not know where they were to go. Their family had emigrated to London from India when they were toddlers. Given where they lived, if they did not attend Hogwarts, they would attend St. George's.

Minerva McGonagall arrived at Potter House at around 7:30 that morning and had barely cleared the floo when the rest of last year's weekend warriors began to pass through as well. They had learned last year that if they arrived early they could expect a nice breakfast. The dining room was soon filled with over thirty children who were eating and many were listening to the ten who made their first trip to Japan tell about their time there. There was one new "member" in the group. It seemed Hogwarts current resident Prank Master had decided to attend as well. Percy told Harry that from everything he had heard from the twins and Ginny, he had to check this out. He had even asked his Head of House Professor McGonagall whether he could participate this year and she had assured him arrangements would be made for all Hogwarts students who became part of this "club."

Percy made it clear he wanted to learn as much wandless magic as possible and anything else he could pick up. He had responsibilities after all. He had to make sure the twins could continue the legacy he and his brothers had set before them and had vowed, to himself, that the Weasley pranks this year would be one that would have to require a revision of *Hogwarts: A History*. He was joking - a little.

Harry, Hermione and Clarice had anticipated the possibility of new members. After all, most of the current members had friends who might be interested and at least a few had younger siblings. Renee Greengrass, for example was six. She would likely join the club after next summer. None of them were prepared for what started piling through their floo at around nine that morning. It seemed to be going



nonstop for ages. When it finally stopped disgorging children, another forty-one had arrived. Hermione took a pad of paper and pen and began writing down names, ages as schools of each of the new arrivals, as well as how they found out about the club. Somehow, they had all learned of it either from their friends at school or from their parents.

“Parents talk too much,” Harry observed at an impromptu meeting Hermione had called. Present were Harry, Hermione, Clarice and the ten who had been in Japan with them as well as Minerva McGonagall. Sirius was left with the impossible task, given his nature, of trying to ensure the sixty-two others did not inadvertently burn down the house. Then again, both of the Grangers were there to provide at least a modicum of adult maturity.

“Okay, this can be done,” Hermione said.

“How?” Harry asked.

Harry then had to marvel. If there was one skill that truly set Hermione apart from others, it was her ability to organize things. She had already gone over the lists she had made as the new “members” had poured through the floo. First of all, she reminded Harry and the other Watanabe students that last year she, Harry and Clarice had managed with thirty other “members.” That was ten members per wandless trained witch or wizard. Now there were only sixty-two who were not trained at the Watanabe School and thirteen who were as trained as the three were last year, if not more so. That was only five to six trainees per trainer. They could easily divide the groups into small sections based upon their comparable experience.

For example, there were twenty who had a full year’s worth of coaching and practice in wandless and mind magics. This would be one group. There were forty-two without such experience who would be another group. The “Second Years” could be divided into two groups, just like before and the new members into four. Moreover, they now had twenty-eight “members” with wands. They did not do much wand training last year because only eight of the thirty had wands. Now they could include that. Hermione seemed to have the whole thing figured out.



Harry agreed with the training structure Hermione devised. He was more concerned about how they would be able to send this new lot to Japan. Hermione convinced him that was something they could work out later. They had, after all, until May to figure that bit out.

Hoping that the would, the new forty-two were divided into their Watanabe years. The twenty who either were already at school or slated to begin as first years joined the existing members of Year 1990. There were eight Hogwarts students who had finished their first through third years, two from each house. In addition to these eight, there were two eleven year olds who would start Hogwarts on September 1st. That gave them fourteen total Hogwarts students including Dora. Getting them here was left to Aunt Minnie to figure out. There were also six St. George's students, again having finished first through third years as well as four new St. George's first years who were to start school on August 28th.

The remaining twenty-two new members ranged in age from seven to ten. Ten were from Hogwarts families and the other ten from St. George's families. Two, a brother and sister by the last name of Chang, did not know where they might end up. Their family had emigrated from Hong Kong eight years ago. Given where they lived, if they did not go to Hogwarts, they would most likely be invited to attend St. Andrew's.

What surprised Harry were the number of families in this group. Only five of the new members did not have at least one brother or sister in the Weekend Warriors, and two of those five had younger siblings who would probably join next year. Last year, sixteen of the thirty members were either only children or the youngest in their families. Now there were nineteen groups of siblings in the Weekend Warriors. From Hogwarts, these were the families Adair, Abbott, Brocklhurst, Clearwater, Collins, Davis, Greengrass, Johnson, Smith and Weasley. From St. George's were the families Adams, Evans, Jackson, McDonald, Palmer, Parker, Richards, and Watson. Finally there were the Changs and Patils. Professor McGonagall noted that it was "quite a haul."



With everything finally organized and after the introductions were made, as well as the now expected dueling demonstration, this time it was Neville, Luna and Susan Bones who had each made it to the quarterfinals in their Fifth Session tournaments, the greatly expanded Weekend Warriors sat down for a large lunch before dividing up into groups for that day's practice. As had happened the year before, every new member achieved a minor feat of controlled wandless magic by the end of that afternoon.

"So what about your brother Ron?" Harry asked Percy as the group began to get ready to leave for the day.

"Mum says he's not ready," Percy shrugged. "Maybe later this year. Maybe next year."

"What's his problem?"

"He's still an immature git," Ginny said.

"Yeah," Fred agreed.

"At least he can now read," George added.

MONDAY, AUGUST 28th, 1989 - THAMES HOUSE, LONDON, U.K.

By a unanimous vote, the Weekend Warriors had agreed to meet almost every day the previous week. Today, the older St. George's students would begin their school year. All but three of the Watanabe students were returning. Those three - Jason Evans, Justin Parker and Ian Smith - were all seventeen, had their N.E.W.T.s and had apparently been offered jobs, although they would return to Japan for at least two more summers to complete their magical and non-magical educations. They said their new employer insisted on that. The Hogwarts students would be bound for Scotland on Friday, September 1st.

This day, however, a group of witches and wizard had been asked to meet some people at a large former palace on the Thames, now the headquarters of MI-5. Harry, Hermione and Clarice were brought there by Sirius and Minerva McGonagall with the two elder Grangers



there as well. The kids had no idea what this was about, but Harry was certain that at least Sirius and maybe even Robert Granger had a clue as they did not look nearly as confused as the others. A young woman ushered them through security and into a large conference room where several other adults were seated. Harry recognized Remus Lupin among them and was not that surprised to see Mike Evans and David Greengrass as he knew they worked here. Still, he wondered what this was about.

They were apparently waiting for others to arrive as another woman offered them tea and biscuits. One by one they were joined by five other men and women whom Harry could tell were magical.

“Any idea what this is about?” Harry asked Hermione.

“Nope,” she replied, “although I don’t think we’re in trouble if that’s what you’re thinking.”

“Good morning everyone,” a man with short, graying hair said as he entered the room. He was carrying a file folder of some kind and took a seat at the head of the table. “For those who have not met me, I am Roger Grant, Director of Office W, State Security. For those who do not know what that means, State Security also known as MI-5 is tasked by Her Majesty’s government with dealing with internal threats to the realm: terrorists, foreign agents and the like. Office W is specifically tasked with magical threats. We are a mixed bag of magicals and muggles and have been operating since the 1920’s, although there were prior offices that performed similar services in the past. I myself am not magical, but I do have magical relatives. To be part of this office you must either be magical or know about magic. More to the point, you must not be biased against it.

“The vast majority of Her Majesty’s magical subjects are law abiding and of no threat whatsoever to either world. It is that small minority that concerns us - and many of you as well. Right now, things are quiet but we all know that has not always been the case. We also know or should know that evil comes and goes. The main reason I’ve called this meeting is we believe an opportunity has presented itself that might one day mean we will not repeat the mistakes of the recent past. Now I’d like to introduce some of the members of my team: Mr.



Mike Evans, non-magical; Mr. David Greengrass, magical; Mr. Remus Lupin, magical and head of our investigation into certain rogue werewolf elements; and soon we will be welcoming Mr. Sirius Black, also magical. Now, I think we should go around the table and introduce ourselves."

"Professor Marcus Fleming," an older man said. "Deputy Headmaster and Potions Master at St. George's School of Magic here in London."

"Professor Coleen Malloy," an older woman said. "Headmistress of St. Patrick's Magical College, Republic of Ireland."

"Professor Walter Mason," a younger man said. "I teach Charms at Preston Academy of Magic."

"Professor Elaine Walsh," another older woman said. "I am Deputy Headmistress at St. Alban's College of Magical Arts in Wales."

"Professor Sir Ian McGregor," an older gentleman said. "Used to work for Office W before I decided to teach. I am Headmaster at St. Andrews School in Scotland."

"Professor Minerva McGonagall," Minerva said, "Deputy Headmistress of Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry and Professor of Transfiguration."

"Interesting collection," Ian noted. "Is it just me, or is there a reason why the six rabble rousers are here."

"Rabble rousers?" Robert asked, not yet introduced.

"Indeed," Ian said. "The six of us are the most vocal critics of magical education in Britain. Have been for years and years. I dare say we are less than welcome at the Ministry for Magic and are not well liked by many of those who wish to maintain the low standards here."

"I can assure you, Sir Ian, that though has crossed our minds," Roger Grant said. "Shall we continued?"



“Robert Granger,” he introduced himself. “I am the parent or guardian of these children. Dentist by trade.”

“Don’t be so modest, Captain Granger,” Roger Grand said. “I do remember you from the Oxford raid back in ‘75.”

“Sir?” Robert asked. He was not trying to deny it, but that raid was Most Secret.

“Everyone here, except for these three young people have signed the State Secrets Act, Captain,” Roger replied.

“Raids?” Professor Mason asked. “And you know about magic?”

“The Kings and Queens have always known about magic, Professor,” Mr. Grant said. “Naturally, if they know, they expect certain advisors to know as well. For a time, said advisor was usually a wizard, but that changed following the Treaty of Westminster in 1196 during the reign of King Richard the Lion Heart, which you might note predates the Magna Carta.”

“Treaty of Westminster?”

“Indeed. The leaders of the magical world were a little put off by the Crusades. This treaty followed the Third Crusade and fall of Jerusalem. King Richard, while grateful for the support he received from all his realm in that war, understood the magical concerns and granted the magical realm home rule. While by treaty, the magical government still answered to the King, in practice it was allowed to manage its own affairs provided it maintained the King’s Peace. Basically, so long as the average Muggle remained ignorant of magic, the obligations under the treaty were deemed fulfilled. For the next several centuries and in particular following the enactment of your Statute of Secrecy in 1692, while there were occasion ‘incidents,’ the Crown never felt it was necessary to get involved in your affairs. That changed somewhat about sixty-five years ago.”

“Why then?” Professor Walsh asked.



“There were rumblings from the Continent about a Dark Wizard name Grindewald. Of particular concern was that he was getting a large following and advocated for magical rule of the world. As this was occurring at the same time as two Muggle despots were either in power or on the rise, we became interested. That was when Office W was formed.”

“But we were neutral in that war.”

“Indeed. And that was a policy His Majesty’s government was willing to support. Still, while neutral, we did not get the impression that your government was doing all it could to prevent the spread of hostilities to our shores. While we adopted a largely hands off approach to your people, we cannot say we took the same approach regarding foreign magicals. Many who came to these shores then did so as refugees. But there were more than a few agents intent upon dragging your Britain into the war. Your Ministry did little to stop them. We, on the other hand, were less apathetic. Like the German Agents in World War II who stood no chance against MI-5, we killed or turned most every magical agent who landed on these shores. We like to think that your continued neutrality was at least in part our doing. We know that during that war there were prominent members of your government and very influential families who were at least sympathetic to Grindewald’s cause, and enough so to keep your government out of it entirely. And that means not even taking measures to ensure the enemy stayed out.

“We learned a lot from that war. Most notably and thanks to our magical allies - mostly Muggleborns as you saw - we learned to tell the difference between magic and accident. Any time your Obliviators are deployed, we get an alert. Most often it’s nothing more than a random incident or a case of accidental magic by a child. Same’s true for the efforts of the Muggle Worthy Excuse Committee. Truth is, they are not terribly convincing. Still, most often we do nothing but note that it happened. After all, it is the policy of this government to allow you lot to handle your affairs.

“Unless your affairs become ours. This was not a real issue for a long while after your Grindewald problem. But, in 1965 we began to note a disturbing trend. Attacks on our side of the line - lethal ones that had



nothing to do with accidental magic. We quickly were aware of your Voldemort and his Death Eaters and, because they precipitated or at least added to and helped trigger - whether they intended it or not - the unrest in Northern Ireland, our government demanded answers from you Ministry. They ignored us.

“Voldemort declared himself to you in 1970. We were already on to him. Our Prime Minister demanded action from your government and nothing happened, so we took action against the Death Eaters. Office W is not a combat branch. We lack the ability. Yes, we are trained to fight as are our magicals, but we are not a large group and we found it was far easier to find a gathering of Death Eaters than the odd individual. We had to employ our military against them when we had the chance.

“You can see our problem, can’t you? In addition to the fact we were killing your bad guys by muggle means, we had an issue with security. Office W, while in charge, never had the numbers to constitute an assault force against a hard target, which was what we usually went after ‘cause it was fixed and we could hit it. That meant we needed folks like Captain Granger here. They had to be ‘read in’ to the notion that magic is real, dangerous and yet at the same time that most magic users were okay. Not an ideal scenario.

“Yet, your government refused to act, so what were we to do? Allow our people to be murdered? Ninety percent of your enemies losses in the war - as in fatal losses - were our results. Captain Granger here led a force that killed thirty-four Death Eaters...”

“And sixty-seven others,” Robert added. “While not Death Eaters, they were families. I left the Service for that. The sight of dead women and children...”

“What?” several voices asked.

“We put up one way apparition, portkey and floo wards,” Mike Evans said. “They could get in, but the only way out was through our guns. We figured they would reinforce if they could. They brought in their families. Used them as human shields and bargaining chips. Basically,



they wanted to be allowed to walk out with a free pass. That was not going to happen. That group made the IRA look tame. Over two thousand murders were on their bill at that time. They were not walking out alive.”

“And they didn’t,” Robert continued. “Anyone who poked their head up got it blown off. Still, they would not budge. Finally had to call in the RAF. Bombed it to bits and then sent in the assault teams. Fifteen were still alive and had wands. They lasted a couple of seconds. It was a slaughter. I am not proud of that op. Not at all. I agree that the thirty-four Death Eaters we killed probably deserved worse. The others? They were only there because those thirty four were willing to sacrifice them to continue to kill others. We were not about to get into a standoff and let either our press or yours get wind of it. They had forty-eight hours to surrender, then we hit them.”

“Did you kill any?” a voice asked.

“Three or four before the assault. Dumb bastards didn’t know to keep their heads down and at two hundred meters, that’s average marksmanship. Four in the final assault. Two were not Death Eaters, but they had wands and were using them. I still have the nightmares.”

“That’s!” Professor Fleming began.

“Horrific?” Roger Grant replied. “You’ve all taken oaths on you magic not to speak of this meeting to anyone not currently in this room. It was not pleasant. But despite numerous calls to your government - and yes ours has a means of communication - they said it was nothing more than some pranks gone wrong. A thousand of our people dead from pranks?? We took action because your government failed to honor its treaty obligations and keep the peace. Had it fallen, full scale military intervention had be pre-approved.”

“It would have been the end of us had that happened,” David Greengrass said. “Those of us loyal to the Queen may have survived, but the rest? It would not have been good.”

“And you stand with them?” Fleming asked.



"I joined them because our government was doing nothing. I was a fully qualified Auror at the time. I stand with them because I have a wife and four daughters and I feel safer with them under Her Majesty's government than the Ministry of Magic. They don't play the same games. A bastard like Malfoy would be rotting in prison, if he had been taken alive. In the magical world, if you know the right people and have enough Galleons, the law is some one else's problem. I am a wizard. I always will be. But I will not support that government - ever."

"I should note you were a Slytherin," McGonagall said.

"Which means I pick the side that will best protect that which I consider important in the end. That has always been my family. Voldemort could care less about that. He kills Death Eaters and their families for sport. The Ministry could care less 'cause that would mean they would actually have to work for a living. The Order of the Phoenix could care less as well - and yes we know about that group. They lack the resources to protect any but their own, and even then they can't or didn't or wouldn't. Just look at the Longbottoms and the Potters!"

"Er..."

"Alice and Frank Longbottom were under the supposed protection of said Order now reside in St. Mungo's! They were tortured into insanity after the last war was supposed to be over! Where was the Ministry for them? Only their son lives and has any faculties at all. The Potters were - er - wiped out as you well know. All were supposedly under the Order's protection! I have a family to think about, Professor. Given history, I'll take my chances with Her Majesty's government as imperfect as it is. It is still better than what we wizards have created! My daughters are part of the 'Club' we are here to talk about because they are friends with these three kids before us. More importantly, they are part of the club because my wife and I agree they will be safer in the end.

"The reasons for the last war have never been dealt with. The Pureblood elitists still exist and thrive. Deal with them, and there can be no Dark Lords. Regrettably, our magical government will not! They



still allow racism to exist - particularly at Hogwarts which supplies many of our government's future leaders. I am a Pureblood as is my wife. We don't care about that nonsense. Magic is magic! But too many of our kind DO care. So long as they do, the last War is not truly over! That is why I crossed over to Her Majesty's government and that is why I remain!"

"And why did the rest of you join?" Professor Malloy asked.

"I'm what you call a Muggle," Mike Evans answered first. "There is magic in my family. I had a sister who was a witch and I married a witch. All my children are magical as well. I was in the Army when MI-5 recruited me because I knew about the world of magic. Most of us Muggles in Office W were found that way. As you know, your government would not hire us even though we have a vested interest in the security of your world for we have family within it."

"My story is even simpler," Remus said. "I too am a fully qualified Auror and worked for Alastor Moody during the last war. I am also a werewolf and have been since I was a boy. The laws regarding Weres were relaxed somewhat back then due to the need for manpower and wands. Unfortunately, as soon as it was over, the old laws were back in place. As a Were, I cannot legally obtain employment in the magical government and most others in our world won't hire me. MI-5 has no such qualms. Here I am not a Dark Creature, rather a person suffering from a manageable illness."

"And you?" Professor Malloy asked Sirius.

"I too was a fully qualified Auror during the last war. At its end, I was thrown in Azkaban for seven years without a trial for crimes I did not commit. It was in the papers last year, as I recall. Needless to say, I do not hold the Ministry in high regard."

"While this lesson has been interesting," Professor Mason said, "I assume we are not here to learn about the last war."

"In a way you are," Roger Grant said. "You must be Mr. Potter," he continued looking at Harry. "Would you please introduce yourself



and tell these good people about your last two summers in Japan and that Club of yours.”

Harry then introduced himself telling the newcomers that he was nine years old and had spent the last two summers at the Watanabe School of Magical Studies along with his sister Clarice and his best friend Hermione Granger, the other two children in the room. Their first summer, they covered five years of materials in five sessions consisting of two 150 day terms each. They advanced from primary school to secondary school in non magical classes and through the completion of their O.W.L.s in magical classes. This past summer, they completed secondary school, completed their N.E.W.T.s and each had earned a Mastery.

He then talked about the club they had going. They started it to help their friends. But it had quickly grown beyond that. The first year they had thirty members ranging in age from six to sixteen. Including themselves, sixteen were “affiliated” with Hogwarts, meaning they either went there or would when they were eleven. There were fifteen affiliated with St. George’s School and two whose family was new to Britain. Ten of those went to the Watanabe school the past summer. The seven older students completed their N.E.W.T.s and the younger three their O.W.L.s. The plan was that next year another ten would go, followed by ten more in the summer of 1991. But just this past weekend, the club grew by forty-two.

“It’s pretty popular it seems,” Clarice said.

Minerva and Sirius followed providing their own observations both of the Japanese school, as they both had been there and the kids group here as well. They were questioned at length by the other educators, each seeming to try and find a flaw of some sort. The idea that such young children could have Masteries stunned them, but they could not refute the evidence that was presented. Professor Fleming seemed pleased that so many of his school’s top students were members and admitted he now understood why three of his rising seventh years had “dropped out.”

“They’re going to be working for us,” Roger Grant said. “This year, they’ll spend three days a week getting training in non-magical fields.



Next summer, we are sending them back to Japan for their Defense Mastery and to begin another Mastery of their choice and to get their degrees. We will probably send them back the following summer as well."

"So I take it we're here to both unofficially endorse this course of study and, perhaps, allow our own students to participate?" Professor McGregor asked.

"That is our proposal," Mr. Grant said. "Our government will cover the expenses involved. We will also offer the Club one of our under used facilities west of London. It is heavily warded and cannot be detected by the Ministry of Magic, so they can practice without running afoul of your laws."

"Is there a reason why you are doing this?" Harry asked.

"Indeed there is. It is in the best interests of both our worlds that our young people get the best possible education they can. Many of you have issues with the quality of magical education as it now stands in Britain. This is a way around that. Moreover, this education is not limited to magic. The students will have the opportunity to attend university as well, an option not realistic here. It is expensive, but Her Majesty's government considers this a sound investment."

"Sound investment?" Professor Walsh asked. "That means you expect a return; conditions and such."

"Not much really," Mr. Grant said. "Our only conditions are that any student whose education is funded by our government must take Defense as one of their Masteries. They must also obtain a non-magical degree."

"That's it?"

"We will offer them employment upon completion of their education or their sixteenth birthday, whichever is later."

"And they have to accept?"



“No.”

“But,” Remus said, “seeing as the salary here is twice what they could expect to make in the Ministry of Magic, we feel many will accept the offer.”

“So they all are going to work for you?”

“No. Some will, no doubt. But there are other magical sections like ours in other departments within the government. The Secret Intelligence Service - MI-6 - has one as does the Ministry of Defense, Foreign Office, Home Secretary to name a few. Plus, they need not necessarily be employed as magicals, which opens up other opportunities.”

“That’s it? They don’t have to work for your government? You’re spending goodness knows how much and you do not even require payback?”

“A fund was set up twenty years ago managed through our office to provide financial assistance to your government. We offered. They refused. But the fund remains and is added to each year just in case either they would change their minds or another opportunity, such as this, presents itself. We would prefer to spend that money rather than have to give it back one day.”

“Any other conditions?”

“Yes,” Harry said. “Students starting this year cannot be over the age of fourteen as of June 30th, 1990 or under the age of seven at that time. Families are to be kept together. That means if a family has kids within that age range, all kids will be allowed to join. And no pureblood bigots! That kind of attitude gets you expelled from our school and will not be tolerated in our - er - club. How are we going to handle this, Hermione?”

“Easy enough,” she said. “Those students who are in school, be it magical or otherwise will attend on weekends just like last year. All others - well I guess we could do two additional days during the week. That should keep things manageable.”



“And what will they be learning?” Professor Malloy asked.

“Everyone will be learning wandless magics and shifting...”

“Shifting?”

“It’s kind of like apparition only easier in many ways. They will also be learning mind magics as well. Those who have wands will be able to train and learn with them as well. We learned non-verbal spell casting practically from day one at school and it is easier than you might think. We also can coach them in physical fitness and the martial arts. A strong body is good for magical development. We can provide tutoring in Arithmancy, Ancient Runes, Potions and Herbology for those interested. And every week, we spend an afternoon in Muggle London.”

“Why?”

“Cause most magically raised kids know nothing about it and tend to look like idiots as adults in that world.”

“It’s about time,” Professor Fleming said.

“Excuse me?” Hermione replied.

“It’s embarrassing in a way,” he continued. “We have argued for more rigorous education and here it is three children do what we and our own government can’t! Regardless, it’s about bloody time!”

“They won’t be able to take everyone,” Remus said. “Just a few.”

“A few is more than none! How many?”

“Hermione?” Harry asked. “Can we managed this?”

She chewed her bottom lip as she thought. After a couple of minutes she nodded. “It’s only fair,” she said finally. “Excluding those of us who went there, there are thirty from Hogwarts families and thirty



from St. Georges. Naturally, that means thirty from each of the other school communities.”

“Preferably equally divided between students in school and younger children,” Clarice added.

“I take it our role is to provide you with those students?” Professor Walsh asked.

“Volunteers only,” Harry said.

“And they must have parental permission,” Mr. Grant added.

“But I do recommend you keep this quiet,” Remus added.

“Why?” a few voices asked.

“We are asking you and them to thumb yours and their noses at the Ministry of Magic and our system of education. They won’t take kindly to that.”

“But, it can’t be kept secret,” Sirius added. “Too many will know. Too many will talk.”

“Then how...” Minerva began before she saw an evil grin form on the old prankster’s face.

“These three are the leaders of their Club whether they wish to believe that or not. You saw them at school, Minerva. They are looked up to and followed. You know how well their friends did both in their year and the year behind them. Mostly their doing, I can tell you.

“But, on the books, Hermione and Clarice are labeled as Muggleborn, even though they are not. Harry’s blood status is also not common knowledge now. The powers that be probably would laugh at the notion of some young, pre-magical school age children without discernable magical heritage running a club that ‘supposedly’ teaches magic the Ministry considers beyond all but the best of witches and wizards. It’ll keep the questions to a minimum.”



"Seems being a Marauder does have its points," Minerva said. "Inside joke," she said to the others as she laughed with Sirius and Remus. "These two were part of a small group of notorious prank artists when they were in school. I am proud of you two," she added softly and with a warm smile neither Remus nor Sirius had ever seen directed at them from her before.

"Now," Mr. Grant said, "as to the matter of compensation and Ms. Clarice's other options."

"Compensation?" several voices asked.

"Other options," Clarice added.

"Well you don't expect that you three and the others you ask to help you run this club are going to do it for nothing, do you?"

"You want to pay us?" Harry asked.

"How much?" Robert added.

"Two hundred quid a week," Mr. Grant said. "Two twenty-five for these three and two hundred for the rest of their fellow - er - instructors."

"Blimey!" Harry exclaimed. Even though he knew he was one day going to be quite wealthy, that seemed like a lot of money.

"Bloody good wage," Robert added. "Better than most teachers make."

"And Clarice?" Robert asked.

"While I'm sure she would love to continue what she is doing," Mr. Grant said, "we run a magical clinic for our magical employees and their families. It is understaffed. We could use a part time Healer."

"Really?" Clarice squealed. "Of course I will! I was - I was hoping, but who would want little me as a Healer?"



"People who'd rather not go to St. Mungo's," Remus said.

"And I was afraid I wouldn't be able to do more than O.W.L. level first aide! Of course I will!"

"Rate's a hundred a day for non-board certified types," Mr. Grant said.

"Oh who cares!" Clarice replied. "This is wonderful!"

"O.W.L. level first aide?" Professor Mason asked.

"Basic part of the Watanabe studies," Clarice said. All students are taught basic Healing; how to stabilize injuries and such. After all, magic can be both dangerous and unpredictable."

"Why don't we teach that?" Professor Walsh asked.

"We do," Hermione said. "It's important."

"So," Mr. Grant said with a smile, "are we all in?"

They were. Little did they know that the revolution had just begun, although this would not be recognized for years.

A/N: WEEKEND WARRIORS AS OF END OF CHAPTER:

## FAMILIES

Olivia Adair, age 14, Hogwarts Slytherin 3rd yr. 1990

Melissa Adair, age 12 Hogwarts Slytherin 1st yr. 1990

Reginald Adair, age 10 (Hogwarts) 1991

Oscar Adams, age 14, St. George 3rd yr 1990

Rachel Adams, age 11 (St. George) 1990

Connie Adams, age 9 (St. George) 1991

Jack Adams, age 7 (St. George) 1991

Justin Abbott, age 13, Hogwarts Hufflepuff 2nd yr. 1990

Hannah Abbott, age 9 (Hogwarts) 1991

Robert Abbott, age 7 (Hogwarts) 1991



Mandy Brockelhurst, age 9 (Hogwarts) 1991  
Cynthia Brockelhurst, age 7 (Hogwarts) 1991

Cho Chang, age 10 (Hogwarts?) 1991  
Aaron Chang, age 7 (Hogwarts?) 1991

Penelope Clearwater, age 13 Hogwarts Ravenclaw 2nd yr 1990  
Stanley Clearwater, age 11 (Hogwarts) 1990

Annie Collins, age 12 Hogwarts Hufflepuff 1st yr 1990  
Jasper Collins, age 10 (Hogwarts) 1991

Tracy Davis, age 9 (Hogwarts) 1991  
Alois Davis, age 7 (Hogwarts) 1991

Jason Evans, age 17, St. George 6th yr 1989  
Amber Evans, age 15, St. George 4th yr 1989  
Michelle Evans, age 13, St. George 2nd yr 1990  
Aaron Evans, age 11 (St. George) 1990  
Billy Evans, age 9 (St. George) 1991  
Cynthia Evans, age 9 (St. George) 1991

Hermione Granger, age 9 (Hogwarts) 1988  
(Clarice Jameson), age 8 (Hogwarts) 1988  
(Harry Potter), age 9 (Hogwarts) 1988

Daphne Greengrass, age 9 (Hogwarts) 1991  
Astoria Greengrass, age 7 (Hogwarts) 1991

Jessica Jackson, age 10 (St. George) 1991  
Gregory Jackson, age 7 (St. George) 1991

Michael Johnson, age 13 Hogwarts Grffindor 2nd yr 1990  
Angelina Johnson, age 11 (Hogwarts) 1990

Aaron McDonald, age 13, St. Geroge 2nd yr 1990  
Elaine McDonald, age 11 (St. George) 1990

Justin Parker, age 17 St. George 6th yr 1989



Robert Parker, 15, St. George 4th yr. 1990  
Michael Parker, age 13, St. George 2nd yr 1990

Justin Palmer, age 10 (St. George) 1991  
Pamela Palmer, age 8 (St. George) 1991

Padma Patil, age 9 (Hogwarts?) 1991  
Parvati Patil, age 9 (Hogwarts?) 1991

Debbie Richards, age 13, St. George 2nd yr 1990  
Charlie Richards, age 10 (St. George) 1991

Maria Smith, age 13, Hogwarts Ravenclaw 2nd yr 1990  
Zacharias Smith, age 9 (Hogwarts) 1991

Maggie Watson, age 11 (St. George) 1990  
Angie Watson, age 9 (St. George) 1991  
Eric Watson, age 8 (St. George) 1991

Percy Weasley, age 13 Hogwarts Gryffindor 2nd yr 1990  
Fred Weasley, age 11 (Hogwarts) 1990  
George Weasley, age 11 (Hogwarts) 1990  
Ginny Weasley, age 8 (Hogwarts) 1991

## OTHERS

Erin Bates, age 11 (St. George) 1990  
Susan Bones, age 9 (Hogwarts) 1989  
Terry Boot, age 9 (Hogwarts) 1991  
Millicent Bullstrode, age 9 (Hogwarts) 1991  
Regina Darcy, age 11 (St. George) 1990  
Colin Dunbar, age 15, St. George 4th yr 1990  
Marcus Finch, age 12, St. George 1st yr 1990  
Andrew Kirke, age 10 (St. George) 1991  
Megan Logan, age 9 (St. George) 1991  
Neville Longbottom, age 9 (Hogwarts) 1989  
Luna Lovegood, age 8 (Hogwarts) 1989  
Ernie McMillan, age 9 (Hogwarts) 1991  
Maggie Meeks, age 10 (St. George) 1991  
Cathy Nolan, age 12, St. George 1st yr. 1990



Theodore Nott, age 9 (Hogwarts) 1991  
Justin Palmer, age 17, St. George 6th yr 1989  
Trisha Powell, age 15, St. Geroge 4th yr 1989  
Roger Sluvey, age 10 (St. George) 1991  
Ian Smith, age 17, St. Geroge 6th yr 1989  
Alicia Spinet, age 11 (Hogwarts) 1990  
Nymphadora Tonks, age 15, Hogwarts Hufflepuff 4th yr 1989



## CHAPTER FORTY: ABOUT HOGWARTS

MONDAY, AUGUST 28th, 1989 - POTTER HOUSE, LONDON, U.K.

"What I don't understand," Rose Granger said, "is why any of these children need to return to their magical schools. I mean they already have their N.E.W.T.s in most cases, right?"

"Because until they pass their seventeenth birthdays, they are too young to hold jobs," Sirius replied.

"But Clarice will be working," Rose protested.

"For the Muggles," Sirius replied. "They are willing to let her because she has your permission and the necessary qualifications. Even with your permission, she is still too young to work in the magical world."

"But she has her N.E.W.T.s"

"Which means she can use magic without violating the underage magical laws. But for her or the others to leave school, they would also have to prove they are seventeen."

"Aren't they?"

"Not according to their birth certificates," Sirius said. "Those are presumptive evidence of their age."

Rose nodded. "Still..."

"True, you could ask for an age detection charm."

"What does that do?"

"It would show how many days they have lived," Sensei said making his appearance. "In Hermione's case, that would be 6,631 days as of today, or eighteen years and two months. In Harry's case, he is 6,315 days old or seventeen years, three months and nineteen days. And Clarice is 5,919 days old or sixteen years, four months and seven days. She becomes seventeen this coming April 21st."



“So why can’t they do that?” Rose asked. “It seems silly to send children to school to study what they long ago passed. That’s why Bob and I pulled the students from non-magical school.”

“If their real age in days were revealed,” Minerva said, “it would have to be reported to the Ministry of Magic as it would show exposure to time magic.”

“So?”

“Time magic is heavily regulated throughout the world,” Minerva continued. “It is because all forms are inherently dangerous.”

“And yet we’ve allowed children to be exposed to it?” Rose practically shrieked.

“The Time Compression at the Watanabe School is approved both by the Japanese magical government and the I.C.W. as it is well within safe margins,” Minerva replied. “Magic can be abused and of all magics, time magic is the most susceptible. We have a device called the Time Turner. It allows a person to actually go back in time anywhere from a few hours to a few weeks. It is highly controlled because there have been problems. Time Compression can also be abused. That magic allows a magically stable person to gain months and even years of experience in a matter of days or weeks. As you have seen, the kids have not aged beyond their real time ages. Yet, there is a limit. If you are under Time Compression for too long, you will begin to age at an accelerated rate. The Watanabe School limits it to 1,500 accelerated days per year. Around 2,000 to 3,000 accelerated days, your body and magic gets used to the new rate and you will age at accelerated speed. At 4,000 accelerated days or so in one year, depending upon the person, you will not be able to stop the process even if you leave the Time Compression. You will continue to age at the new rate and die of old age within a couple of years or less. Hence, it is highly regulated.”

“And what does that mean?” Rose asked. “Are my children in danger?”



Harry could not help but smile at this comment. While he had suspected it for ages, Rose Granger had just said he was one of her children.

"No Rose, they are not," Minerva said. "That school is well within safe limits. But, the point is that kind of magic is regulated. Were the children to be tested for their assimilated ages here in Britain, the Ministry of Magic would become involved and launch an investigation."

"Investigation?" Rose asked.

"Use of Time Compression out side of a Ministry approved facility is illegal," Minerva said. "The kids did not break the law as they were both overseas and in an ICW approved facility. But, they arguably broke the spirit of the law."

"How so?"

"The Ministry is all about control," Sirius answered. "As and organization, it fears the masses - as few as we may be. We do not live in a true democracy. Control of our people is the goal of the Ministry. So long as we are sheep, they stay in power. Should we learn magic they cannot counter effectively with their Auror's, well ... They fear revolution. They control information and access to it. A lot of the magic these kids learn in Japan is banned here because were it known by the general public, they could - er - revolt."

"And again," Minerva said, "we are not technically breaking any law. There is no law that bans studying overseas. But the law assumes that they would be studying on the Continent which, while not as oppressive as here, still limits the age at which one can buy a wand and formally study to age eleven. Our government does not see that we can conceivably send our children somewhere more liberal - like Japan."

"But this is why we are keeping this secret," Sirius said. "Right now, there are only four Watanabe students in our schools. Should they be discovered, our Ministry could well pass laws to ban further attendance. Minerva, Marcus and the others at the other schools are



to run interference. This is for our future. We know we will be discovered one day, but by then there will be too many children in the Program for the Ministry to stop. Stopping four is easy. Stopping hundreds is not. Even with their control of the press, the Ministry will be hard pressed to stop hundreds.”

“You’re hoping for a *fait accompli*?” Rose asked.

“For lack of a better word,” Sirius nodded. “Prank the whole lot of them!” he added with a grin.

“So I assume you mean that these three will have to attend Hogwarts when the time comes?” Rose asked. “Even though by then they will be so educated they would have nothing to learn there?”

“They are on the list,” Minerva said. “It would raise questions if they did not. True, as of right now there are few who can connect the dots and associate Harry with the Boy-Who-Lived - few adults at any rate. But, Harry Potter is still on the list and his absence would be noted.”

“Unfortunately,” Sirius said, “should Harry enter that school as a student, the collective amnesia will be lifted.”

“What?” several voices asked.

“Looked it up,” Sirius shrugged. “The physical protections on this house and family will remain. But the moment Harry or Clarice ‘come out’ in our world - as in either declaring themselves publicly or entering a public institution like Hogwarts, the memory blocks will be lifted and the likes of Dumbledore will remember them.”

“Is that a good idea?” Rose asked. “I mean with all Harry went through and all?”

“In the end it’s unavoidable,” Sensei said. “Delaying it until the summer of ‘91 is advisable, but they need to go.”

“Why?”



“Several reasons. First off, two of the horcruxes are there. True, Minerva might be able to arrange for them to get in earlier to hunt for them, but that would only collapse that aspect of the ward sooner. Make no mistake. Dumbledore may not remember Harry now, but I have no doubt he remembers he forgot something. The man’s a bloody genius. If Harry crosses the Hogwarts wards, the memory charm will collapse. It’s part of that warding system as I understand it. I don’t trust that old codger. I am certain he wanted Harry isolated, alone and therefore easy to mold into his little weapon. Should Dumbledore remember Harry before we are fully ready, he will use his considerable influence to return Harry to a less than ideal situation and separate him from his sister and friends.”

“But he’s an adult in the magical world,” Robert protested.

“He is,” Sensei agreed, “but Clarice and Luna are not. Neither is Neville for that matter. Even when they become adults, they would have to disclose that fact to him and to the Ministry to avoid his schemes. It would be best if we delay that date until Harry has to go to that school. Right now, Dumbledore could affect Harry’s living situation. Once Harry is in school, what can he do? He cannot do anything - particularly if Clarice and Luna start school with Harry and Hermione.”

“What do you mean?” Rose asked.

“If Luna, Harry and Hermione start school together, the four Founders Heirs will be in place. They are friends. As such, the school will answer to them. That means that Dumbledore can take no action against them unless he wants to be replaced as Headmaster.”

“A situation he would not want,” Minerva added. “He holds three significant positions in our society: Supreme Mugwump of the International Confederation of Wizards, Chief Warlock of the British Wizengamot and Headmaster of Hogwarts. While he devotes most of his time to the former two, the latter is more important to him. The former two he retains, but he does not truly control as they are very political and he knows he has enough enemies to remove him if they ever got organized. In his position as Headmaster, however, his only concern is the Board of Governors. There are twelve. Five are in his



pocket. There used to be three who generally do not like him, but the one with the most influence, and the ability to affect the opinions of the four I'd call neutral, was Lucius Malfoy who lost his post when he pled guilty last year. If the heirs - or when the heirs return - the Board of Governors by charter cedes its authority to the true owners. They only exist as caretakers in a way who 'mind the store' until the heirs finally get together.

"Hogwarts is important to Dumbledore because he is unassailable there. If he loses that position, he is vulnerable. In addition to his lost prestige, he would also be evicted and would be hard pressed to find as secure a place to live. He has many enemies. Some would love to see him dead, but will not attack him in public. They cannot attack him otherwise so long as he lives under the protection of Hogwarts and its wards. Were he to lose that position..." Minerva shrugged suggesting things would not go well for Dumbledore.

"The magic that controls Hogwarts is ancient," Sensei said. "It is also complicated. Ordinarily, if a magical heir has no parents or living ancestors who could claim such rights and attains the age of eleven, they come into their magical inheritances. For the founders, this is different. While a Founders magical heir can claim that lines' rights, they cannot come into the full inheritance alone. They must enter Hogwarts as a student and as friends with the other three heirs. If those conditions are met, they can as a group claim what is theirs - Hogwarts itself. Another condition is that they each are young enough to - er - produce their successors. Although the heirs are now friends and are each over eleven in days, they cannot claim that inheritance for they are not and will not be students at Hogwarts anytime soon. Harry and Hermione will not be invited to attend until the fall of 1991. Luna the following year..."

"Actually," Minerva said, "we can work around that one. As Deputy Headmistress, I can allow a student to attend a year early if I feel they are up to the challenge, and no doubt they are, and if I believe there are extenuating circumstances. The Headmaster delegated admissions to me long ago."

"That means Luna could start school with us?" Harry asked.



Minerva nodded. "And Clarice."

"Why me?" Clarice asked. "Not that I mind, you know. I'd really hate to spend that time separate from my brother and best friends."

"Last thing Dumbledore asked me to do before the wards went up was find Clarice," Minerva said. "He told me it was important with you supposedly dead, Harry. I'd like to think it was because of your bloodline, although I fear it may have been that he saw her as a potential replacement pawn for you. He will remember of Clarice when that part of the ward falls and probably want to scheme regarding her again. He also knows Clarice is a year younger than Harry. If a Clarice were to show up in Harry's year from a Muggle background, I doubt he'll figure it out right away."

"All we need is twenty-one days," Harry said.

"Why that many?"

"Luna would turn eleven twenty-one days after we start on September 21st, 1991. Once she does, we could claim our rights as heirs and prevent Dumbledore from messing with us. Getting the two horcruxes that are there and keeping Dumbledore from messing with us are two good reasons to go, if you ask me."

"Three horcruxes," Sensei said. "A third should arrive there in September '92. The conditions that led to its arrival remain unchanged."

"And how did that occur?" Minerva asked.

"Lucius Malfoy slipped it to an unsuspecting First Year student who then brought it to Hogwarts."

"But he's in prison."

"For now," Sirius said. "He is due to be released in early 1992 at the latest."

"Still, what makes you think he'll still...?"



"The conditions that led him to slipped that horcrux remain unchanged," Sensei said. "While a lot has changed since my time, many of the conditions remain unchanged and cannot be changed. Arguably, some of them should not be changed for now."

"You never really told us much about what you actually did," Harry said.

"Indeed," Sensei said. "Given what I am going to be asking you to do starting this year, perhaps I should now."

This piqued everyone's interest.

"As you may recall, prior to my eleventh birthday, I knew nothing about magic," Sensei began. "About a week before, my Hogwarts letter arrived, but my Uncle prevented me from reading it. It was my Aunt and Uncle's intent that I never attend. Needless to say, that did not work out as planned.

"I met my first magical person literally at about the stroke of midnight on my birthday. His name is Rubeus Hagrid and he's the games keeper at Hogwarts. He was sent to make sure I got my letter and then to take me to Diagon Alley to get my school things."

"Dumbledore sent Hagrid?" McGonagall asked. "But he never sends Hagrid to do that!"

Sensei shrugged. "He did that time. Hagrid is one of the nicest people you'll ever meet, but he is fiercely loyal to Dumbledore and is frequently used to run errands. Getting me was one of two that day. The other was to pick up something from a vault at Gringotts. That something was an object that if it fell into the wrong hands would have allowed Voldemort to return. Years later I learned it had been placed in the Vault only a few weeks before by Dumbledore himself. It was bait for Voldemort. A professor at Hogwarts had returned from a year's travel and had been possessed by what remained of Voldemort's soul. Dumbledore used that object as a trap.



“Now what I don’t know is whether that object was the whole scheme or not. I mean, if you know Hagrid, he does not keep secrets well and can be a little careless about some things.” This earned a chuckle from Sirius, Remus and McGonagall who knew the man well. “While I did not see the object, I was there when Hagrid retrieved it. I also later read about an attempted break in at Gringotts involving the very same vault. It is possible that I was part of Dumbledore’s scheme as well. But, it is also possible that Hagrid was just sloppy and I was more curious than expected.

“The object was hidden beneath the school and access to it was guarded by seven traps, five of which were potentially lethal. Yet so formidable were these traps that Hermione, another friend of ours and I were able to figure them all out. Only one of them was probably beyond that ability - a troll. Although a friend of mine and I were able to beat one months earlier. The relative ease we had getting through to the object suggests Dumbledore made it easy on purpose. Although that might have been because the professor in questions was hardly the sharpest knife in the drawer.

“I also don’t know what Dumbledore had in mind for the possessed professor. I doubt he intended the outcome. In the end, I wound up killing the professor - not intentionally mind you and it was in self defense as the professor was trying to kill me at the time. Still, I doubt that was part of Dumbledore’s scheme. My guess is he wanted to catch the possessed professor and have him locked away in Azkaban. If there is one thing you should know about Dumbledore it is that he abhors killing in any form and for any reason. I can say this with some confidence. At that time, Dumbledore did not know about any of the horcruxes. I believe he suspected that Voldemort might have one, but he was not certain.

“End of second year was when he became certain. That Diary horcrux was the key. As I said earlier, Lucius Malfoy slipped it to a first year in Diagon Alley. The soul fragment eventually took possession of the girl.”

“That’s the story about the Chamber of Secrets, right?” Harry asked.



Sensei nodded. "So you know the end. I wound up killing a sixty foot basilisk at the age of twelve. What I did not tell you was why that whole thing happened.

"I'm fairly certain Lucius Malfoy has a good idea what that diary is. He knew what would happen to the girl at the very least and that she would open the Chamber and set the beastie loose. The beastie was set upon Muggle Borns with the intent to kill them or drive them from the school."

"Sweet Merlin!" Minerva said. "Were any ... were any killed?"

"No. Four students were petrified by it including my Hermione, but none were killed."

"Why would Malfoy do such a thing," Sirius wondered. He knew Malfoy hated Muggle Borns, but to kill them like that? True, Malfoy had killed Muggle Borns before during the last war. But in peace time when he was not "protected" by Voldemort and Death Eaters, it did not make sense.

"Malfoy was trying to disgrace a political rival," Sensei said. "Sounds rather callous, but that's it. The rival had seen to the passage of numerous laws that Malfoy found offensive and the girl was his daughter. The laws promoted Muggle Born rights..."

"Ginny Weasley!" Minerva gasped.

Sensei nodded. "Ginny's father saw to the passage of numerous pro Muggle and Muggle Born laws. Had his own daughter been implicated in the murder or attempted murder of Muggle Borns, his efforts would have been discredited and many of the laws might well have been repealed."

"That's just sick," Rose Granger said. "Killing children!"

"Malfoy is a true believer," Sensei said. "Death Eaters had little if any regard for human life - aside from their own that is. They are a sick bunch. What is disturbing about them as a group is they espouse Pureblood beliefs and supremacy, yet ignore the beliefs at the same



time. Children are considered sacred under wizarding tradition. It is an unwritten law that they should be spared at all costs. Yet the Death Eaters made no such distinction. They routinely wiped out whole families, including infants and pregnant women.

"Now I mention these two events in detail because the conditions giving rise to them cannot and should not be changed. That professor must be possessed..."

"Why?" Rose asked. "I mean if that professor was warned, couldn't that be avoided?"

"And it sounds like if not warned, then the Professor in question must die," Remus added.

Sensei nodded gravely. "Whether Harry kills him is not certain, but yes he will still have to die."

"Why?" Minerva asked.

"Voldemort was seeking a witch or wizard to possess. He happened upon said hapless Hogwarts professor. In some ways it was fortuitous as the professor in question was not particularly powerful or skilled. Had the Professor been more gifted, there are other ways Voldemort could have tried to return - ways that would not have exposed him to Hogwarts or Dumbledore. Should Voldemort take possession of another witch or wizard, it is probable he could return by 1992. Were that to happen, in all probability Malfoy would not practically deliver one of the Horcruxes to Hogwarts. Unless that diary comes to Hogwarts, it will be very difficult if not impossible to locate."

"Maybe Malfoy would send it along anyway," Clarice suggested.

"A remote possibility," Sensei said.

"Why?"

"I will admit I do not know how much Malfoy knows about that diary. I can assume he knows it is dark and that if it is used it can take possession of the user. I also think he knows that if the user happens



to be a Hogwarts student, that student might be compelled to open the Chamber of Secrets and attack Muggle Borns. He might even know it's a horcrux, in which case he knows that if it takes full possession of the victim it can use that victim to return Voldemort to a corporeal state.

"That being said, Malfoy at the very least knows that diary is important to his former Master. He would not have given it to Ginny if he believed his Master had returned. Likewise, Voldemort is not about to risk losing any of his horcruxes. Consequently, the key events leading to Ginny gaining possession of the diary must be allowed to continue as before."

"That means a friend and colleague of mine must die?" Minerva asked.

"As far as I know, you were not friends," Sensei said. "But probably. The possession must be allowed to happen as before. Much as I'd like to and as much as I believe you would like to, not everyone can be saved. Some deaths are inevitable. Some may even be necessary. Any death that would lead to Voldemort's own death sooner rather than later when things spiraled out of control will save lives - millions upon millions of lives. For those who must die or cannot be saved, this is harsh. But for millions, they will enjoy lives they never had in my timeline."

Everyone was silent for a moment before Harry spoke. "Hogwarts does not sound like loads of fun. I mean, what kind of school is it where you face real life and death stuff that young?"

"My fault mostly," Sensei said. "I went looking. Not for the danger stuff, but the curiosity got the best of me and landed me in trouble. But you're right, Harry. Even though I don't remember actually killing that Professor my First Year - I passed out before he died as he was strangling me - I know I did kill him. No eleven year old should have to deal with that, although to be honest I never lost sleep over it. And my Second Year, facing a twenty meter basilisk with a sword that was both too big for me and I did not know how to use? Again, not my idea of a fun time."



"You said you're were not trying to really change things until 1995," Hermione said, "yet you just told us about your first two years suggesting without saying we should."

Sensei nodded. "The years will start the same. The end result as long as it's one Dark Lord defeated and one horcrux destroyed can change from the day school starts without messing things up too much. My only suggestion now is when the time comes deal with those situations sooner rather than later."

"And Third Year?" Harry continued, "I assume that'll be the same?"

"It's already different," Sensei replied. "Third Year for me was the one year in seven that I never had to face Voldemort or his Death Eaters or both."

"Sounds almost normal," Clarice observed.

"Except it had its own drama," Sensei replied. "During the summer Hols before my third year a vicious Death Eater and mass murderer escaped from Azkaban - the only prisoner who had ever managed that without outside help. Everyone in our world was convinced he was after me, including me. His name was Sirius Black."

"Oi!" Sirius protested.

"We all know that was a pack of lies," Minerva said.

"But no one did then," Sensei continued. "The Minister for Magic at that time - one Cornelius Fudge - thought it would be a good idea to send about a hundred or more Dementors to Hogwarts..."

The magical adults all gasped and Sirius noticeably paled.

"I need not tell Sirius here how much fun that can be," Sensei continued. "Those things apparently liked me a little too much..."

"Tell me about it," Harry sighed.

"What do you mean?" Sirius and Minerva asked in unison.



"Master's Level Defense we are exposed to a Dementor," Hermione said. "The first time is to show us how they feel when they are around and to show us just how nasty they can be. The other times are to practice driving them off with a patronus charm. It was ... unnerving to say the least."

"Down right horrible," Harry said. "I can now remember the night my parents died thanks to that thing. I was in a crib, I guess. Mum was with me for some reason and I heard Dad's voice calling out that he was here and telling Mum to take me and leave. Mum did something - I don't know what - and then picked me up just as a man in dark robes entered the room. He told Mum to put me down so he could kill me and promised that if she did he would let her live. Mum didn't believe him. She screamed at him. A green flash of light and I am on the floor and Mum is next to me not moving. A wand in my face and another flash of green light and..."

Sensei nodded. "They did the same thing to me."

"Why didn't Dad tell Mum to take me as well?" Clarice asked.

"Voldemort didn't know about you, Clarice," Sirius replied. "Only your Mum, Dad and I did. Well, us and Madam Pomphrey."

"Who?"

"She was the Healer for your family at the time. Dumbledore didn't even know about you until he arrived there after. Had Voldemort succeeded, he would have not bothered searching the house for any survivors. You were asleep in another bedroom. I was the first to arrive and found you moments before Dumbledore showed up. Your parents knew Harry was the target. They also knew or believed Voldemort would not bother himself with you at the time."

"No one knew?" Minerva asked.

Remus nodded. "Sirius was the only one allowed in to that house even after the change of Secret Keepers. Pettigrew hadn't been there in many months and neither had I. I only found out about Clarice later



in a letter from James and Lily that was only to be delivered in the event of their deaths.”

“So anyway,” Harry said hoping to change the subject.

Sensei nodded. “That whole year I was certain Black was out to kill me. Then we - er - ran into each other so to speak and the truth came out. He was not the traitor or murderer, it was Pettigrew. Unfortunately, before the truth could be told the damned dementors attacked and Sirius, Hermione and I were damn near killed... We weren’t, but Sirius was captured and was to be executed forth with upon orders of the Minister for Magic.”

“It didn’t happen?” Sirius asked.

Sensei shook his head. “It was my first foray into time magic,” he said with a grin. “My Hermione had a Time Turner. She was taking every course offered and needed one to attend all her classes as at least a few met at the same time. McGonagall gave her one at the beginning of the year and she never told anyone until that night. We used it. We went back in time, rescued a Hippogriff from execution and then...”

“Why?” Hermione asked.

“Cause it was innocent,” Sensei replied. “Long story for another time, okay?”

Hermione nodded.

“Then we went to save Sirius. The Dementors were trying or getting ready to kill our past selves so I cast my patronus - which Remus taught me as he was our DADA professor that year and the best one I ever had...”

Remus beamed.

“Hermione said there must have been a hundred or so...”

“How old were you then?” Remus asked.



"Thirteen."

The magicals were all impressed.

"Is that good?" Rose asked.

"Few if any adults could have done that," Sirius said. "Seems Sensei was quite the young wizard. Harry is at least good. Better trained, in better health. Blimey!"

"Then, we flew up to the tower where they were keeping Sirius and set him free as well," Sensei continued.

"How?" Remus asked.

"Hippogriff," Sensei said. "Gave it to Sirius for his escape."

"What happened to the rat?" Sirius asked.

"He turned into a rat and scampered off," Sensei said. "Without him, we could not prove Sirius was innocent. While Sirius was free, he would be a fugitive for the rest of his life..."

"That's obviously changed," Sirius began.

"Yeah," Remus said with mischief in his voice, "now you're just a lay about."

"I will have you know that I am not!" Sirius shot back. "Just 'cause I don't have a job yet..."

"What? Can't this old Werewolf give you the mickey?"

"Three days a week I look after my godchildren and my 'adopted' godchild Hermione so her Mum can work. I took the job in Japan to be with them. It's not like I need the money, but once Sophie and I are married - and come home from our honeymoon - I will take the job with Office W. These kids - well, they don't need me as much as they did."



"We still want you, Siri," Hermione said honestly.

"I know, Dove. I will always be there for you three - even if I become a Dad to someone else. You are my first children and I thank you for that chance and will always be a part of your lives - whether you like it or not," he added with a chuckle. "But until my wedding day, you'll still have to put up with this old dog."

Sensei continued his talk about the changes. Harry paid attention, but not nearly as much. He would remember how Sensei said that Fourth Year had changed as well. In Sensei's time, Peter Pettigrew had escaped and apparently left in search of Voldemort. They were joined at the end of the summer before Fourth Year by another Death Eater named Barty Crouch Jr. This man had supposedly died in Azkaban, but had been 'rescued' by his father about a year after his incarceration for the torture of Neville Longbottom's parents. The body moldering in an unmarked grave at that prison was actually that of his mother. She was dying from some fatal disease and had replaced the Death Eater using polyjuice potion.

"Stupid," Harry said, rejoining the discussion.

"How so?" Robert Granger asked.

"Aunt Minnie said earlier about abusing certain magics. Well, that potion is one that can have disastrous consequences if abused."

"Really?" Rose asked. "What does it do?" Apparently, Sensei had not explained that bit.

"It is designed to allow a person to transform into another. The transformation is almost perfect. You will look like the other person, regardless of size and such. For example, were I to take the potion, I could turn into anyone here with just a hair sample - except maybe Sensei, as he has no hair to sample."

Harry earned a chuckle for that.

"I would be indistinguishable from you in almost every way," Harry continued. "Only my DNA would remain unchanged."



“And magicals know nothing about that,” Remus supplied. “He would be who he appeared to be.”

“Right,” Harry continued. “But, the effect only lasts about an hour or two. To continue, you must take the potion again. And there is the rub. The potion is a poison. Nasty stuff if abused. Taken sparingly, it is harmless. But taken over and over and over again, it is suicide. Your body will get used to its new form over time. Now we are talking weeks or months, but still. Once that happens, you go off the potion and you will suffer from potentially fatal withdrawal. By that point, however, the poison has built to a level where if you don’t go off the potion, it will kill you as well. Basically, take it long enough and you’re dead.”

“How long,” Robert Granger asked.

“Varies from person to person,” Harry said. “A few months, though, and you’re in serious trouble.”

“And how do you know this?” Minerva asked.

“Honors in Potions,” Harry said with a smile. This seemed to placate everyone.

“Barty Crouch used it for several months,” Sensei continued. “He used it to assume the form of that year’s DADA Professor.”

Harry listened as Sensei explained the plot to kidnap him and use him in a Resurrection Ritual. This Crouch character was the means to make this happen. He altered something called the Tri-wizard Cup to accept Harry as a contender in a dangerous competition. Then this Crouch guy stacked the deck so that a young Harry could win the competition even though he was only a marginal student and was up against top students from three schools, each of whom was three years older than he was. Harry touched the cup with another - one Cedric Diggory from Hogwarts. It was a portkey. They were taken to a graveyard. Cedric was killed and Sensei was bound and forced to partake in the ritual which brought Voldemort back.



This had all changed, Sensei continued. Pettigrew was in prison and Barty Crouch Jr. had been captured. It was part of the crackdown that had followed the acquittal of Sirius Black in this timeline. Crouch Sr. had raised suspicions and was investigated. A search of his house and Crouch Jr. was found, suffering under the imperious curse his own father held him under. Crouch Jr. was sentenced to the Dementor's Kiss. He died a couple of months later. Crouch Sr. was now doing time in that prison and was not due for release until 1998.

Following Sirius Black's release and the scandal surrounding Harry's abuse at the hands of his now dead relations, the current Minister for Magic held a 'house cleaning' series of investigations that had all but destroyed the original timeline. Scores of former Death Eaters, including twenty-five major vote holders in the Wizengamot and thirty-two Ministry officials were now in prison serving thirty to three hundred year sentences. Many of them had played a roll in Sensei's time. Several others were also gone. They had not been sentenced, but just sacked. These included Cornelius Fudge and his right hand 'man' named Dolores Umbridge.

Sensei said that the world had indeed changed, but could not say for certain if it was for the better. The imprisonments and sackings would have little effect over the next few years. They merely erased Sensei's later years. He stressed that none of these events would prevent Voldemort from trying to return. The priority now was to prepare for that return.

"Prepare the battlefield," Harry said.

"Indeed," Sensei agreed.

"What do you mean?" Rose asked.

"Von Molke said that no plan survives first contact with the enemy," Hermione replied to her parents surprise. "Yet the competent commander wins the battle before the forces engage. His forces are trained - better trained than the enemy. His forces are trained to adapt to changing circumstances. They are deployed in whatever way gives them the greatest advantage and places the enemy at the



greatest disadvantage. When they engage, thus they can and should win the day.”

“Where did you...” Rose began.

“A superior force can lose to an inferior one,” Harry continued. “It is all a question of preparation. Your troops must be well supplied and commanded. But there is more. If you know yourself and your enemy, you need not fear the outcome of any battle. If you know but yourself, for every battle won, there will be a battle lose. If you know not yourself, you cannot hope for success.”

“What’s that?” Rose asked.

“Sun Tsu, The Art of War,” Robert replied. “And they are right about that bit.”

“Who?”

“He was a mercenary Chinese general who lived around 500 B.C.E.,” Hermione said. “Standard reading his book is in Defense at school. There was once a King whose sought a good general. Enter our author, Sun Tsu. He offers a challenge to the king. He will pit one hundred of the King’s concubines in pitched battle to the death against one hundred of the King’s best soldiers. He asked for a couple of months to train. The King agreed. The training was rather brutal at first as Sun Tsu had to behead a concubine or two for insubordination. But his army of women slaughtered the army of the King in the end. His book is mandatory reading at school in Defense.”

“So, how do we win this coming fight?” Robert asked.

“Already begun,” Sensei replied. “The kids’ little club is a huge step. Time - that is what we need now. Time. My guess is the changes have given us that, but we cannot count on that. Thus, the first two years at Hogwarts must play out to some extent to prevent the enemy from coming back too soon.

“That being said, I have some projects for you lot this year.”



"You do?" Rose asked.

Sensei nodded. "Before Sirius is distracted with his soon to be new wife and job, we need to get to the one horcrux that is attainable right now. Then we need to see the two destroyed. The kids learned and ancient spell this last year which can see that done."

"Li Huan's Spell," Hermione replied.

"Exactly!"

"And where is this other horcrux?" Hermione asked.

"It's buried under the floor of a shack outside a town called Little Hangleton," Sensei replied. He gave a detailed description of what he knew about that place including the graveyard where he had been taken and what he remembered about the Gaunt shack - the home of Tom Riddle's mother. It was not much as he had never been there and his trip to the graveyard was by portkey. He knew there was a Manor House nearby and as the village had a cemetery beside the church, the cemetery of the Riddle family was somewhere else, most likely near the Manor which overlooked the valley where Little Hangleton lay. "Beyond that, I have no idea. I think it's in England proper, but I don't know. I do know it's protected by powerful curses and such. One is fatal if not broken. It was killing Dumbledore in my time as he failed to detect it before... But that's another story. You have a fully qualified Curse Breaker in Sirius now. You can avoid that fate. Just be sure that no one tries to wear that ring until all curses are broken and the horcrux within is destroyed."

"You want me to go with them?" Sirius asked.

"It is essential. Unless and until one of them is a Curse Breaker too..."

"While I intend to get that mastery," Harry said, "we're looking at the summer after next at least! I want my Potions first."

"You know me," Sirius said. "I'm in."



"Your other mission this year involves Luna," Sensei continued.

"Luna?" the three kids asked.

Sensei nodded. "Unless something changes, her mother dies this year."

"What do you mean?" several voices asked.

"My Luna only told me a little," Sensei replied. "She told me her Mum is a spell crafter and that when Luna was nine her Mum died when a spell she was working on went wrong. Luna was there. She saw her Mum die and it definitely had an effect on the girl. She never told me when it happened. She never told me the details. What little I could gather suggested that had a witch or wizard been there who could do magic, Luna's Mum might have survived. It was just a nine year old Luna then. No wand, no magic, and Luna's Mum died. Please find a way to prevent that?"

"How?" Hermione asked.

"Don't know," Sensei replied.

"Should we tell her?"

"Don't know," he replied again. "Your call. But be there for her, please?"

The three kids nodded. On their own they each decided to help their friend. They would save her mother if they could. If they could not - for they all knew there was no way to know when this would happen and all agreed in their own minds that telling Mrs. Lovegood to stop spell crafting was not an option - then they would be there for Luna if the worst came to pass.



## CHAPTER FORTY-ONE: THE FIRST MISSION

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 11th, 1989 - OUTSIDE THE VILLAGE OF LITTLE HANGLETON, U.K.

High over the English countryside an eagle was in flight circling over the landscape in an ever larger circle as if it was looking for something. The bird of prey had terrorized the local birds and smaller animals who had all scurried for the safety of the trees and burrows as the raptor scouted the ground below it. Oddly, the Eagle did not seem interested in finding a meal, but it was certainly searching for something. It suddenly stopped circling and turned, flying at great speed towards a small wood and descending as if to land.

Hermione sat on a folding chair in front of one of two small tents located in some woods in rural Yorkshire, England sipping a cup of tea. It was early in the morning and she and Harry had been the first to awake. This was not her first camping trip by a long shot. Both her parents loved camping almost as much as they loved traveling and they usually went camping at least once a year. Since Harry and Clarice had joined the family, they too had been on a couple of camping trips. But this was not like any camping trip Hermione had ever been on before.

For one thing her parents were not with them this time. Their adult supervision was Sirius Black who had admitted he had never been camping before. Neither had one of the two others in their party. This was Neville's first camping experience as well. Luna had spent months and months in tents before as her Dad was a self proclaimed naturalist and traveled to remote place all over the world in search of new magical creatures. Luna had been camping even as a baby. She was up now cooking breakfast.

Another thing that was very different were the two small tents at their secluded campsite. They had borrowed the tents from Luna's father so naturally they were magical. Hermione understood that intellectually, but she was stunned by what they really were. They had arrived at this site the night before and spent about half an hour pitching camp. The boys were sharing one of the tents and she,



Clarice and Luna the other. From the outside, it looked like it would be a snug fit to say the least.

The insides, though, came as a surprise. Luna had described these tents as “pretty basic.” If one called a three bedroom flat with a large living area, a dining area, a full bath and fully equipped kitchen “pretty basic,” Hermione wondered what a high end magical tent was like. Even after all this time, magic could still be amazing.

Still, this whole escapade was not something Hermione would have thought prudent. This was not a holiday or a safari to seek out new magical creatures. This was an actual mission, one which she felt was hastily arranged and ill planned. They did not really know what they were looking for! It was all that bloody Sensei’s fault.

The same day as their meeting with MI-5 and the teachers from magical schools all over Britain, Sensei had decided to grace them with his presence. The old codger was fun to be around most times. He told the most amazing stories about his life. As much as Hermione enjoyed the stories, she felt they were never placed in any kind of context such that she could see how it fit into his timeline and their’s for that matter. Still, she enjoyed his visits - usually.

That one after the MI-5 meeting was different.

Sensei had not really explained much about his timeline since the kids had left for their first summer in Japan. It was not yet necessary. For now, it was more important for them to learn as much as they could. Still, he would tell them stories. These were stories of things that probably would not come to pass based upon the changes in Harry and Hermione’s life that had already occurred. He told them of how he came to learn he was a wizard and of his first trip into the wizarding world with a giant of a man named Rubeus Hagrid. He told them of the first time he met Hermione and some of the adventures they had together over time. But he had never told them any of the details about his dealings with one Voldemort, aside from the day that Harry and Clarice’s parents were murdered. But it was only after that fateful day he told them the truth about his life. He had never lied to them, just held back on some major details. This was their first real mission to change the total future and she knew that now.



What he had told them was infuriating to Hermione. It had taken them weeks just to find out where this village of Little Hangleton was. It could have been anywhere in the British Isles, but at least Sensei was right, it was in England proper as opposed to Wales, Scotland or Ireland. The problem was it wasn't on any of the usual road maps. Apparently, either the cartographers had missed it or it was so insignificant that they didn't bother to include it. It was only because Great Hangleton was on some older maps and Sensei had mentioned a memory of a sign indicating that the two were six miles apart along the same country lane that they felt they had the right location. Harry was now out doing the initial reconnaissance. He was looking for a small village in a valley with a large, abandoned Manor House on a ridge overlooking the village and a shack somewhere nearby on the opposite side of the valley.

It had taken the lot of them two weeks to get this much information. Neville came across the old maps at his home buried somewhere in the Longbottom library only a few days ago and now they were here in a wood. It seemed ill planned in Hermione's opinion. She wanted more information before they charged off into the wilderness but the others had overruled her. Luna thought it was a lovely idea - a camping trip - even if they found nothing. Neville loved it too. He wanted some adventure in life, even if it was futile. Harry just wanted to get this horcurx hunt over with and Sirius would take any excuse to get out and have fun with his kids as he saw them. Am I the only rational one here? Hermione thought to herself. She had to admit, though, it was fun so far. They had cooked out last night and stayed up making up stories and singing songs together. Still, she knew how important this was and still wished they had planned it better before venturing into the unknown.

They had arrived the night before by blind apparition. Sirius had used side along apparition to transport Luna and Neville. They knew how to shift, but you could not shift into the unknown. Apparition allowed that possibility, even with the risks and range limitations. After setting up camp and having a meal and some fun together, they had retired for the evening to get ready for today and the days that followed.



Hermione frowned as she thought about how much this “mission” had been expanded. This was not just about getting a horcrux. Harry wanted to eliminate the possibility of the resurrection ritual as well. Three of them knew about that ritual and had learned about it in N.E.W.T. level Ritual Magic. A key component was a bone from a dead male ancestor. Sensei’s vague description of the site suggested the Riddles had a private family graveyard. Harry had suggested they rob it, steal the potentially useful bones and destroy them thus denying Voldemort that ritual. It would not prevent Voldemort from returning, but it would deny him any reason to kidnap Harry for that purpose as the other methods did not require the blood of an enemy. Hermione found the whole thing morbid in the extreme, but try as she might she could not deny the logic. In addition to eliminating the kidnap plot that had occurred in Sensei’s timeline, this might just delay Voldemort’s return for a time - time which they could use to prepare a “warm” greeting for Tommy Boy and his minions - as Harry had taken to calling them.

Still, they could not even be sure if they were anywhere near the objective. This might be a total waste of time. Even then, they had been warned by Sensei that the target was protected by curses of some sort, but not exactly what they were or where they were. Too many variables, Hermione thought and was thinking as an eagle landed near her. She watch as the magnificent bird transformed into her best friend.

“You’ve been gone a while,” Hermione said to her eagle friend.

“Sorry,” Harry replied sheepishly, “got side tracked.”

Hermione raised an accusing eyebrow.

“Salmon were running in the river,” Harry said.

“You didn’t!”

Harry shrugged.

“Salmon?” another voice asked. “Where? Leave any for me?”



Hermione saw that Clarice was awake.

“Four miles south southwest by a large lone oak along the riverbank,” Harry replied. “Ate one and left one in the grass. If you hurry...”

Hermione looked at Clarice and instead saw a raven who took flight immediately speeding off into the distance.

“Harry!” Hermione said in an accusing tone.

“Just ‘cause you have yet to embrace all of your form’s natural abilities, don’t get all high and mighty on us,” Harry said. “I am a predatory bird and Clarice is a carrion eater. I kill them, she eats them, or at least my leftovers.”

“It’s just so disgusting,” Hermione started.

“You’re a house cat! You’ve read up on them! They eat almost anything they can catch. They are the most predatory of all cats really. The others tend to be more specialized. Only Clarice the Raven has a less discriminating palate. All a raven cares about is that it’s dead.”

“Still...”

“You never really tried to be the cat, have you?”

“I have!”

“There’s more to being a cat than jumping up on laps, getting petted and purring. Try being the predator...”

Harry did not finish as Hermione resigned herself to a losing argument and had transformed into Miss Kitty and sprinted off into the underbrush. Harry was not certain she would fully embrace her predatory instincts, but it was a start. He left for the “boys” tent to sketch out what he had seen that did not involve salmon.

The tent flap opened sometime later just as Harry finished his crude map. He saw the young blonde girl standing in the entry.



“Hey Luna,” he said.

“Breakfast is ready,” she replied. “Where are the others?”

“Well, Raven is off for my leftovers by a river,” Harry said. “And Miss Kitty took off into the woods for who knows what...”

“Oh,” Luna sighed, “I can’t wait to find out what my common form is. It seems so cool! And the others?”

“As far as I know, they are not up yet.”

“Well, we’ll just see about that,” Luna said severely. “It’s well after the dawn, you know.”

Harry nodded in agreement and looked over his map again as Luna headed for the bedrooms.

“WAKE UP!” Harry heard her yell. “WAKE UP!! BREAKFAST IS GETTING COLD!!!”

Harry watched as Luna then sprinted out of the tent giggling.

“What the Bloody Hell was that?” a deep voice said. Harry saw Sirius coming from his bedroom.

“Just you’re friendly Nargle inspired wake up call,” Harry quipped.

“I’ll get that harpy,” Sirius growled. “One day...” He then trudged off towards the bathroom.

Breakfast took a while. For one thing, it did not even start until both Neville and Sirius had showered and it seemed Sirius liked long showers. For another, there was a lot of food. Although Neville had said something about Luna being the favorite cook on their floor at school, this was Harry’s first exposure to her culinary talents and he had to admit the girl was quite good. Harry would never admit she was as good as he was, even if that were the case. Harry took a great deal of pride in his cooking abilities. Still, it was a wonderful meal.



Clarice had returned from her trip to the riverbank just as they were sitting down and thanked Harry for the salmon appetizer. Hermione, however, was nowhere to be seen. Harry explained that she had turned into Miss Kitty after Clarice and he had “encouraged” her to explore her cat qualities more. At first, no one seemed concerned but everyone was worried within a half an hour or so. While a feral housecat might be near the top of the local food chain, there were still fox, badgers not to mention the occasional eagle that might see Miss Kitty as a meal. Just before anyone of them voiced their collective thoughts of looking for the seemingly wayward witch, Hermione entered the tent and sat down for her own breakfast.

She apologized saying that cats have no sense of time really especially when stalking prey. She told them of picking up a trail of what she later learned was a squirrel and how she stalked it deep into the woods. The moment of truth arrived where she knew she was in a good position to pounce when she decided she really did not want squirrel for breakfast especially when there were eggs and bacon waiting back at camp. She then realized she was lost.

“Apparently, my cat as a terrible sense of direction as well,” she said.

After a moments panic, she transformed back into her real self and shifted back to camp.

“Useful that,” she said. “Can’t get lost if you know where you’ve been.”

Once the breakfast was over, the tale of the misadventure of Miss Kitty thoroughly told and the dishes and pans cleared away, cleaned and set to drying, Harry produced a piece of paper.

“Okay,” he said to the others, “while at least a couple of you were having a lie in, I did a little scouting.”

“You find it?” Sirius asked.

Harry nodded. “Drew up a map,” he said. “Probably not to scale but it should do.” He lay the paper on the table and pointed to an “X” with a



circle around it. "This is our current camp site. We are about two hundred yards from the south edge of this wood. From there, the land is slightly rolling with fields separated by walls or hedgerows. Three miles due south of our position is a narrow valley with a river running through it to the southeast."

"That's where he found the salmon," Clarice said.

"Anyway," Harry continued, "about five mile up the valley to the northwest is the village of Little Hangleton." Harry pointed to some squares and lines on the map. "There are about thirty homes there, a church with a large graveyard, another building I could not identify, a pub, a market and a petrol station. That's about it.

"Anyway, on the north ridge overlooking the village and the valley is Riddle Manor," he said indicating another square on the map separated from the others.

"You sure?" Hermione asked. "I mean it is supposedly abandoned."

"Pretty sure," Harry said. "It meets Sensei's description in the key details and here," he pointed to another making, "about two hundred yards from the Manor house is a small graveyard - well smaller than the one in the village at any rate. All the headstones I could read said 'Riddle' on them."

"Probably a family plot," Neville added.

"That's my thinking," Harry agreed.

"Okay," Hermione said, "that's the secondary. Where's the primary?"

"Hard to find," Harry said, "unless you can fly."

"Which rules out most of us, unless you include brooms," Neville said.

Harry nodded in agreement. "However, it can be found. About three hundred yards to the west of Riddle Manor is a large boulder on the north ridge of the valley. It's about ten feet or more in height and you cannot miss it. If you stand at the base of the boulder and look back



at the village and use the church spire as a site line, beyond it you will see on the far side of the valley a lone oak in the middle of a field. A hundred yards due west from that oak is a hedgerow - a double hedgerow actually. In the middle of the two hedgerows is a narrow country lane, the one that connects Little Hangleton to the town of Great Hangleton. Anyway, just across the second hedge on that line is our primary - the Gaunt shack."

"You sure?" Hermione asked.

"It's the only place in the whole area that remotely fits Sensei's description. And, given that there are the remains of a dead snake on the door, I'd say it's a fair bet."

"Brilliant!" Sirius said. "Now all we have to do is get there."

"It would take hours and hours on foot," Luna said. "Shifting maybe?"

"It will still take time," Hermione said. "We can only shift to places we know or can see. Harry of course could get there right now, but not the rest of us."

"No way around that," Neville added. "Guess we just shift south until we reach the edge of the valley, then west along the ridge to that boulder and then to the tree. From there, I suppose we could walk."

"Sounds like a plan," Luna said with a smile. "Oh this sounds like fun."

"At least until we get there," Sirius said somberly. "Sensei did say the target is protected by curses. He doesn't know how many or where they are, aside from two on the target itself. Contrary to popular belief, Curse Breaking is a slow and deliberate process. Might take hours, even days to get to the target itself."

"Best pack a lunch then," Luna said. "I'll whip up a picnic basket while the rest of you get it together." With that Luna rose and headed off to the kitchen in the Girls Tent.

"Why not just relocated the camp," Sirius asked.



“No need,” Harry said. “We can just shift back if we need to.”

Sirius nodded. Shifting was one of the skills he did learn in Japan and he found it useful, if not as flexible as apparition. Tactically, it was extremely useful if you knew your destination as you could arrive without making a sound that would alert an opponent - or a Muggle for that matter. They then discuss what they would bring along. All five of the kids had staves and all had varying degrees of training with them. Luna and Neville had just started learning stave magic, but they could still be useful. Clarice was to bring her Healer kit just in case and it was also agreed that having Harry and Hermione's swords might not be a bad idea. The swords could be made invisible, which was useful if they felt the need to wander out in the open.

Sirius now regretted not going with the others for the climb up Mt. Fuji. He spent that real day with Sophie figuring the kids really did not want too much supervision and he wanted some alone time with his fiancé. He was there for Clarice's birthday party which was held once they all got back. But now, he was without a stave and had to rely on these children for that magic. He wanted the staves because they could overpower any wand based curses since they relied upon ambient magic and not the magic of the caster. But, this meant he would have to teach the stave wielder the spells. Then again, maybe that was not a bad thing. He had five willing students with him and learning this magic was useful.

It took the group about an hour to get ready for their next adventure. The picnic lunch was prepared, although Luna refused to say what it was. Once all preparations were made, checked and double checked, the group set out. It took them another hour to reach the oak tree.

“Right then,” Sirius said as they had gathered beneath the tree. “Fair bet we are safe for the moment. I doubt Voldemort's defenses extend this far out. But once we reach the second hedgerow, we should proceed with caution.”

The five children nodded in agreement.

They reached the second hedgerow without incident. They found an overgrown passageway through that hedgerow beyond which was a



run down old shack with the remains of a snake on the door. Sirius went through first, wand in front and muttering what sounded like muffled incantations.

“Stop!” he hissed just as he cleared the hedge.

“What is it?” Harry asked.

Sirius waved his wand and a wall of red light appeared but a foot in front of him. “Magical tripwire,” he said.

“What’s it do?” Neville asked from behind for he was bringing up the rear.

“If we cross that line, it will set something off,” Sirius said.

“What?”

“Could be anything really. Could be a curse or a magical object or it could unleash a right nasty beastie, can’t say. Fair bet whatever it is is best not set off. Give me a few minutes.”

The kids nodded. They all knew this mission might be dangerous but none of them expected to encounter danger more than fifty feet from the door to the house.

“Right then,” Sirius said after more mutterings, “wand based trigger.”

“We know Voldemort uses a wand,” Hermione began.

“No, that’s not what I meant. I mean a wand sets it off. Leave your wands and you can pass through no worries. But, fair bet there are other traps we’ll need a wand to detect or to get through so basically this is set up to set you up for later.”

“What’s it trigger?” Neville asked.

“No idea. Most likely a magical device of some sort given the nature of the trigger.”



“Can’t you take it down?” Clarice asked.

“Not without triggering whatever it is,” Sirius said. “Pretty advanced stuff. Well beyond the ancients. We need to find the device and disarm it. Once that is done, no worries for now. Problem is, it seems the device is on the other side of the tripwire so to get to it we have to cross...”

Neville appeared on the other side of the red wall.

“Neville!” Hermione scolded when it was clear that nothing had happened, even though everyone including Neville was sure something would.

“Stay close to the line, Neville,” Sirius said. “Fair bet there are other traps.”

Neville nodded.

“How did you...” Hermione began, although it was obvious.

“Shifted,” Neville shrugged. “I kinda figured Voldemort did not think of that one.”

“You could have been killed!”

“Still might be,” Neville paled. “But this is important, right?”

Hermione could only nod. She was at least a little surprised it was Neville who had been so bold. Harry she could see doing something silly like that. There was obviously more to their friend Neville than she had realized.

“How do I find the device?” Neville asked.

Sirius explained a revealing spell to Neville. It was at least N.E.W.T. level even in Japan and Sirius hoped the O.W.L. student could handle it. Then again, Neville had done well on his O.W.L.s.

“Got it,” Neville said after a few minutes. “It’s buried.”



"You'll need to carefully dig it up," Sirius said. "And don't use your wand."

Neville nodded. "Should have brought shovels," he muttered as he conjured a small one and began to carefully dig a hole. It took twenty minutes before he had dug around what looked like a canister of some sort.

"Right," Sirius said in a whisper - for some reason they had been whispering, probably the tension, Hermione thought. "Here's the next spell I want you to try..."

Neville again did as he was told. He was in a cold sweat as he applied this new revealing charm to the top of the canister expecting everything to go pear shaped. It did not. Everyone could now see red tendrils of magic connecting the canister to the tripwire.

"What's that?" Clarice asked.

"Magic," Sensei said. "It connects the tripwire to what ever triggers whatever is in that canister. It must be disconnected."

"H-how?" Neville asked.

"Simple Finite should work," Sirius said.

"Sh-should?"

Sirius nodded trying to appear confident.

Neville applied the spell and the tendrils vanished. Neville sighed when nothing else happened...

"Damn!" Sirius said.

"Did I do it right?" Neville asked with fear in his voice.

"You did fine," Sirius said. "There's another device."



“How do you know?” Hermione asked.

“Because the tripwire would have dropped if that was the only one,” Sirius said.

“Bugger!” Neville said. “Give me a few. My hands are shaking and...”

Harry shifted across the wire.

“Harry!” Hermione said.

“We don’t have all year,” Harry shrugged and then began using the spell Sirius had told Neville. Twenty minutes later, another canister had been unearthed and the magical tendrils removed. The tripwire vanished.

Sirius walked over to Neville. “You okay?”

Neville nodded. “Pretty intense,” he said.

Sirius nodded. “Pretty nasty too. Garroting Gas.”

“What?”

“The symbols on the canister,” Sirius said. “It’s Garroting Gas. Deadly stuff that.”

Neville backed away from the canister as did Harry.

“It’s okay,” Sirius said as calmly as he could manage. “It’s safe. Without the trigger it won’t release.”

“What’s Garroting gas?” Luna asked.

“Asphyxiant,” Sirius said. “A Garrot is a piece of rope or wire used to strangle an opponent. The gas does the same thing. Lethal stuff.”

“Bloody hell,” Neville sighed.

“Once more into the breach,” Sirius said moving forward.



Over the next hours they found six more traps awaiting them between the hedgerow and the door to the hut. No two were alike and all were exceedingly dangerous. Each of the kids assisted Sirius in clearing each barrier mainly because each was a very stressful situation which would have overwhelmed any one of them had they had to deal with more than two in a row. To be honest, when they finally made it to the door, they all wanted to go home, but none of them said anything like that. It did not help that the door would not open for any of them or any spell they tried.

"I could use a bite," Luna said. "What say we head back to that oak tree for a picnic?"

Everyone agreed that this was a wonderful idea.

Most of the group were seated under the oak tree eating in relative silence. It had, after all, been a very stressful morning. For all but Sirius, this had been their first deliberate encounter with a life and death situation. True, Harry and Clarice had had theirs in the past, but not by their choice. Harry had not sought to be beaten half to death and Clarice certainly had not sought for her adoptive parents to die, or for that car crash that claimed her adoptive mother. This had been the first time any of the children truly challenged the fates as it were.

Neville was seated apart from the others. While there was no banter between the others, Neville had chosen to sit a ways away to eat his sandwiches that Luna had prepared that morning. He really was not paying attention to them and if asked could not tell anyone what they were. He was lost in thought.

"Neville?" a voice asked. "Mind if I join you?"

Neville shrugged and looked up and saw Clarice was standing nearby. He waived to a spot and she sat down with her own sandwich. For a time, they ate in silence.

"Neville?" Clarice asked.



Neville looked at the green eyed, raven haired girl.

“Why did you do it?”

Neville was caught mid bite and did his best to choke down his mouthful of sandwich before answering.

“Do what?” he answered with feigned innocence.

“Shift across that first tripwire.”

“The idea just came to me, you know? Voldemort is a Brit and shifting is not known here. I figured he didn’t know about it.”

“But why do it? Why not just suggest it?”

Neville shrugged.

“You could have been killed! You could have set off the...”

“But I wasn’t and I didn’t.”

“Still. Why Neville?”

“Had to.”

“Why?”

“Hard to explain.”

“Try me.”

Neville sighed. “Many reasons. One, had I suggested it - well you know there would have been endless debate about it. Hermione would have...”

“Yeah, probably.”

“Figured it would just save time and argument just to do it and see what happened. Worked out in the end.”



“Neville!”

He sighed again. “Before I met you guys I had no friends. None. What’s worse is that I am from a long and distinguished Pureblood line - according to my Gran and such - and until a few weeks before you guys came along, my whole family thought I was a Squib. They never saw any accidental magic from me and...

“Squibs are not liked here. Worse than being a Muggle in some ways. You know about magic, are raised with it and can’t do it.

“Gran loves me. I know that. But she isn’t the most cuddly of relations. I know she was disappointed. She was so proud when I finally did some magic and even prouder when I came back from Japan. Still. She thinks her son - my Dad - was the best wizard ever and that I could not possibly live up to that. She never said it. It was all a matter of what she did say and her tone. I think she thinks I could never be as brave...”

“You are though,” Clarice said.

“I suppose.”

“So you did that to prove it to your Gran?”

“She’s not here and I’m not about to tell her, Clarice. No. I did that for myself.”

“You could have been killed!”

Neville nodded. “Don’t want to die. But of the lot of us, I am the expendable one.”

“What the hell does that mean?”

“Mr. Black is our Curse Breaker. We need him to see this through. Harry, Hermione and Luna are Founders Heirs. Can’t lose them. Lose Luna and unless her Dad has another kid, that line is gone. Hermione - she does have cousins who could continue the line, but... And of



course you and Harry. He's the heir, but the lines would survive through you. Still, you all are more important than I am."

"Neville!" Clarice scolded. "Don't you say that! Don't you ever think that! You are important too! You're our friend! And, should something happen to Harry and me, you are the next Gryffindor Heir!"

"I know but..."

"Don't you ever scare me like that again, Neville Longbottom!" Clarice said as she stood and walked off. Neville wondered what had just happened.

An hour later the group was back at the shack.

"So how do we get in?" Luna asked.

"Sensei said something about Voldemort being into blood rituals and such," Harry said. "Told us that when he told us about his horcrux hunts."

"Blood rituals?"

Harry nodded and then used his wand on his left hand causing a large wound to appear and bleed freely. He placed the bloody palm to the door and it dissolved into dust. As he healed his own wound, Hermione observed to the rest that the door had probably rotted away ages ago and only existed through magic. They entered the hut.

It was as Sensei described even though it had been seen only in a memory. One large room was all there was. The people who had lived here had slept in a loft above, probably without beds given the few crude furnishings in this main room. The floor was dirt and showed signs that the house was not waterproof. In a heavy rain, this was most likely a muddy sty. Sirius had his wand out.

"Barrier field," he said.

"What?" voices asked.



"A magical field. It's harmless, but we can't get through it at all. Wand based."

"What's that mean?" Luna asked.

"To break the field, we need magic more powerful than the caster," Sirius said. "As Voldemort was one of the most powerful wizards alive, fair bet we cannot wand are way through it."

"Dumbledore did in Sensei's time," Hermione said.

"And he is at least slightly more powerful a wizard," Sirius said.

"Staves?" Harry said to the others. The kids nodded back. Staves did not draw their energy from the magic user but from the ambient magic. Even in the middle of nowhere, a stave was an order of magnitude more powerful than any wand - provided it remained in constant contact with the natural earth. In a place like this that had all kinds of magical enchantments atop the ambient magic ... it only took seconds for the field to fall to the stave users.

Sirius scanned the room. He soon turned to the others and told them it was clear. There were signs of additional curses, but they appeared to be affixed to the target itself and not as defenses to prevent further approach.

"And where is it?" Clarice asked.

"Buried," Harry said. "That's what Sensei told us."

"I know that, but where?"

"Middle of the floor," Hermione said with her wand out. "Dead center. Dark magic."

"That seems like a silly place," Luna said.

"It would be if you assumed anyone could get this far," Neville said.

"And Voldemort probably figured no one would," Harry added.



“Right, let’s do this,” Hermione finished.

They dug a hole in the center of the floor and soon found a wooden box.

“No curse on the box,” Sirius began.

“Don’t open it!” Harry said. “Sensei told us there were at least two curses on the object inside. It is a ring. The first curse is a powerful compulsion charm that will make you want to wear it. The second is some kind of decaying curse. You’ll begin to rot while still alive. First the finger, then the hand, then the arm, then - well when it reaches a vital organ you’re dead. No stopping it, apparently.”

“So what do we do?” Sirius asked.

“Destroy in place,” Hermione suggested.

Harry nodded in agreement.

“Right then,” Hermione said. “We’re going to cast Li Huan’s spell. It’ll take two of us to do with staves and as Harry and I are the only ones who know it, that leaves us. The spell will protect us according to what we read, but it will released the soul fragment and it will try to find a new host. Clarice, Neville and Luna? You need to case a powerful stave based shield charm to protect yourselves and Sirius, okay?”

“And if it fails?” Sirius asked

“Then one of you will be possessed as Harry was by that fragment. We don’t know the purification ritual.”

The others nodded.

“How long?” Luna asked.

“Thirty seconds maybe,” Hermione said. “The sources are not - er - clear on that point.”



“Let’s do it,” Neville said. “Let’s get this over with.”

Everyone nodded.

“Once we begin, put up the shields and keep them up until we tell you to stop,” Harry said to the other stave users who nodded in understanding.

Harry had his stave in his right hand, Hermione in her left. They joined their free hands together and started a chant or mantra that sounded not unlike Buddhist monks. Light began to emanate from their joined hands and slowly began to work down to the box. The others cast their shields. When the light reached the box, it began to glow bright green and kept getting brighter until it was almost blinding. Moments later, a scream filled the air but not from any of the magic users. A dark smoke rose from the box and immediately set upon Harry and Hermione and another scream followed. The smoke backed away as if shocked by electricity or burnt by fire and then regrouped and headed at the others. It screamed in apparent frustration as it bounced off the shields again and again. Then, it began to dissipate with a mournful wail. Once it was totally gone, the chanting stopped. The first horcrux had been destroyed.

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 13th, 1989 - POTTER HOUSE, LONDON, U.K.

Hermione was glad to be home again. It had been a stressful few days. The destruction of the first horcrux had been stressful enough, but if she thought that was the end of it, she was mistaken. Harry then had the bright idea to deal with the Resurrection Ritual that had been used in Sensei’s time to bring Voldemort back. She had agreed his plan had merit, but that’s where her agreement ended.

Grave robbing? Arson?

That’s what Harry proposed. They would head over to the family plot at Riddle Manor and dig up the graves of Tom Riddle, Sr. - Voldemort’s father - and all his six male ancestors entombed there and destroy the remains. Why was she the only one who found this



disturbing? True, she agreed it would work, but digging up graves in the middle of the night?

She learned a little about Necromancy from Sirius as she tried to argue her way. Remains could be used by a Dark Wizard in many horrible ways, which could only be avoided by leaving no remains to use. This made sense, but did not make it right. Still, to her dismay, she was outvoted by all the others.

They used magic to unearth the remains of Voldemort's fathers. They used magic to transport the coffins from the family plots to Riddle Manor. Then Harry hit them with his second "Brilliant" idea. Riddle Manor had been a stronghold in Sensei's time. Harry thought it best be done away. He directed the others and the coffins were placed in the largest room on the ground floor. The next morning - yesterday - they went to the village and bought several cans of petrol. When the sun set, they returned to Riddle Manor with the petrol and doused the coffins liberally and the rest of the ground floor as well. Once done, they all left and Harry cast a flame spell into the dilapidated manor. It caught fire almost immediately.

The place burnt to the ground. She knew it would. She knew they had not been seen. Still, it bothered her. The remains had been reduced to ash, so this place was no longer of any help to Voldemort. Still, Hermione hated the fact that they had done what they did. Just because it was necessary and achieved their goals did not make it right. She hated the fact that Sirius thought it brilliant and that Harry seemed to have no remorse whatsoever for what they had done. But she loved them and knew they did it for the right reasons. It didn't make it right, but it was tolerable. She wondered what else they would have to do in the coming years to end this nightmare...



## CHAPTER FORTY-TWO: AFTERMATH

Frank Bryce had enlisted in the British Army in 1940 not long after the fall of France. He was seventeen at the time. By 1942, he found himself as a gunner in a tank in the British Eighth Army in North Africa and already a veteran of a few desperate fights with the German Afrika Corps. At the famed Battle of El Alamein, his tank battalion was assigned to “demonstrate” before the German’s main line. Essentially, this meant convincing the Germans they were both going to attack and would be the main attacking force. The real attack took place far to the north as the bulk of the Eighth Army bypassed the main German resistance and got into their rear forcing a general retreat.

Early in that battle, not long after the dawn on the first day and following an all night artillery barrage, Frank’s unit moved out. His tank was hit by an eighty-eight that had somehow survived the barrage. Frank was the only crewman who survived, but he was severely wounded. The wounds to his leg could never be repaired completely. He was shipped back to Britain where he recovered as much as his wounds would allow and was discharged on medical disability in late 1942. He would walk with a pronounced limp for the rest of his life and the nightmares about his battles never went away.

His injuries and lack of an education prevented Frank from getting what he thought of as a decent job. War industry was booming throughout Britain, yet his leg prevented him from working in the factories and he lacked the skills to work in an office. He needed some work. While he had a pension, it was not much at all. In the spring of 1943, he finally found an advert for a job he probably could do. The War had a devastating effect on gardeners and domestics as there was more money in the plants than on a household staff. Most all able bodied men were either in the factories or in the military. Still, there were always those aristocratic types who had money and wanted to enjoy their comforts. The Riddles were one such family.

He was hired on as a gardener. He did not like the Riddles and they did not seem to like him much at all. Then again, they seemed to look down on everyone. He knew the only reason he got the job was because no one else was available, but it was a job and it paid well



and he had always liked gardening. Given his leg, it was arguably the best position he could expect. Being swift was not a job requirement as plants could not run away and there were practically no time sensitive issues that required quick feet.

He never knew how the Riddles became so wealthy, but guessed it was probably some ancestor. The older Riddles clearly had never done and honest day's work in their lives. The younger one, their son, was thirty-eight and was known throughout the area as a playboy. With all England at war, he had neither joined up nor was contributing to war production – unless one considered siring children out of wedlock war production. Still, they left Frank Bryce alone and allowed him to live in a cottage on the grounds rent free. It was a nice quiet life for the twenty-one year old war veteran.

He had barely been on the job a year when it happened. Frank kept to himself mostly. Once a week he would walk slowly down to the Pub in the village of Little Hangleton for a few pints. He seldom said anything to anyone and they left the wounded war veteran alone. Then one day, the Riddles were found dead in their dining room at the Manor by their day maid. Frank had only been in the Manor house once and that was on the day he was hired and he never made it past the foyer. Still, as the quiet and somewhat mysterious outsider the eyes of the entire village and law enforcement fell on him.

There were problems, however, but not for Frank Bryce. First off, the house was always locked. One needed a key to enter at anytime and for now the Riddles were not entertaining. They had not since the War began partly because they had been on the wrong side politically and were now shunned by polite society. The only people who had keys were the maid, cook and the Riddles themselves. From a standpoint of access, the cook was a better suspect because she had been the last person to see the Riddles alive. There was no way Frank could have entered the house without help.

The other problem was that aside from three bodies, there was no evidence of foul play at all. The bodies showed no sign of injury and there was no poison found in either their systems or any of the remaining food or wine. While three healthy people do not ordinarily



drop dead for no reason, that was what appeared to have been exactly what had happened.

Then there was the fact that Frank had an alibi. He had spent that evening downing pints at the pub and had left well after the Riddles had supposedly died. The police were left with a suspicious event but no evidence of any crime and no good suspect. The matter was dropped after only a few days, but the people of the village were convinced the young man had something to do with the deaths of his employers.

The estate had kept Frank on as groundskeeper. They let the maid and cook go almost immediately, but Frank stayed on. Later, he also became the caretaker of the now abandoned Manor. The rumors eventually died down, but Frank was never really accepted into the community. He also never really cared. He was quite content with his life.

For years only the hard corps gossips in Little Hangleton continued the debate as to the guilt or innocence of Frank Bryce. Most of the town either chose to ignore the issue or came to believe he was not involved. After all, assuming the Riddles were murdered, a cold bloody killer like that would not have stopped, would he? The matter seemed to have disappeared into local legend.

Then the Fire Brigade was called. A great blaze was reported on the ridge overlooking the town and when the fire fighters responded, they found the abandoned Riddle Manor fully ablaze. It was too far gone to stop and all they could do was keep the blaze from spreading. It took almost twelve hours for the fire to burn itself out and fortunately, aside from some bushes and trees near the house, there was no other damage. But, as with all such fires, the cause was investigated and it was immediately ruled an arson as there was clear evidence of "accelerants." This news hit the Little Hangleton rumor mill only hours after the local constable had reported that seven graves in the Riddle family plot had been plundered – the holes were never filled in and the coffins were missing. No one knew why, although all thought they were somehow connected. One theory that was popular was that the arson was to cover the robbery, but the savvier rejected this as silly. If you wanted to cover the robbery, why leave the graves open?



Immediately, those who remembered the murders in '44 turned their speculation to one Frank Bryce. He lived there all alone after all. Others asked the inevitable "why?" What could be gained? The older residents said that he was clearly 'round the twist which was all the explanation they needed. But what about the graves? Coincidence, of course. No one believed Bryce was in any condition to both dig the holes and remove the coffins on his own. Pouring petrol and tossing a match was another matter altogether. Perhaps he just grew tired of running off the kids who frequented the abandoned Manor either for a place to be alone with a date – a scary date – or to chuck rocks through the windows.

But the Bryce theory hit an immediate snag. Frank Bryce had been admitted to hospital a week earlier after suffering a heart attack at the local market. It turned out that despite the speculation of the gossip queens, he had not left. He had undergone heart surgery and was not due to be released for another week at least. His alibi this time around was even more air tight than the last time. Little Hangleton was left with another mystery for which there was no foreseeable answer.

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 20th, 1989 – POTTER HOUSE,  
LONDON, U.K.

The last week had been difficult for Hermione. On the one hand, she understood why they did what they did at Riddle Manor. On the other, it was a crime. Harry and Sirius had tried to explain that it was war, but was it? She had refused to listen but had tried to be as normal as possible provided they did not get into another argument about that night. She knew it was not working as she had hoped. While no one said anything to her, she knew they were all concerned and that try as she might, she was not her usual self.

Harry, Clarice and Rose probably knew Hermione as well as anyone in their somewhat extended family. She liked to work things out for herself, or at least reason them out to a point where she could approach a problem rationally. She was one who preferred detailed planning and plans within plans and contingency plans for the contingency plans to what she considered impulsive behavior or



responses. She also preferred to analyze everything to reach the best conclusion. The raid on Riddle Manor violated these two elements of her nature and seemed “unnatural” to her. Intellectually, she knew that things could be over planned and over analyzed and too much brooding over a problem or courses of action could lead to inaction or worse. Sometime, she knew, any action was better than doing nothing, but she did not think that way. She also knew the maxim set forth by Von Moltke that no plan survives first contact with its adversary and therefore being able to improvise and think fast were keys to success as well.

She was a good dueler both with magic and without. She knew that in that context, she did not over think or overanalyze because there was never time to do so. But where there was time, her old habits kicked in and – well that was why she was brooding about that night. Yesterday had been her tenth birthday and her second “real” birthday since Harry and Clarice became a part of her life. She enjoyed it, but not nearly as much as she knew she should have. She was also certain the others had noticed.

This morning, Aunt Minnie had pulled her aside and she was certain she knew it was because of her mood. She had not told anyone who was not there about what they had done. She was certain they would either be as upset as she was or, at the very least, very disappointed in the lot of them and especially Sirius who was now as much a part of her new extended family and as loved as any. She did not want her mood or what they had done to ruin it for everyone. Deep down, the lonely little girl was still there and still afraid that what she had now was just a tease, not a permanent reality. She knew she was not the only one who had these fears. Harry still feared that his “rescue” was only temporary and Clarice still feared losing those she loved. This did not make things any easier for her right now.

To her surprise, Aunt Minnie had nothing to say about her mood.

“You’re ten,” Minerva said with a smile and Hermione nodded back. “It is now time to learn more of your family, and I don’t mean what you already know.”

“Excuse me?” This was not what Hermione had expected.



“This is not secret unless you want it to be, but I would not tell just anyone if I were you.”

“I don’t understand.”

Minerva smiled. “You will. As you know, as a magical you have a longer life expectancy than non-magicals...”

Hermione nodded wondering what this was about.

“... but even that varies from family to family. Now, did they teach you about human reproduction in Japan?”

Hermione nodded. “This isn’t the ‘Talk,’ is it?”

“No,” Minerva chuckled. “I leave that discussion about the evils of boys to your parents. Anyway, absent unnatural causes – such as war – a witch such as yourself can expect to live well past the age of 100. 130 is not uncommon and about the average, really. Still, we are mortal and there are diseases that can claim us earlier. Likewise, some families tend to live shorter lines. The Blacks, for one, are not known for their longevity – at least not in recent generations. I was born in 1905.”

“You don’t look that old.”

“Thank you,” Minerva said. “Actually, I’m technically middle aged for a healthy witch. Now, despite our longer lives, our reproductive years as witches are at best only a little longer than it would be without magic. We have fewer problems with pregnancies and such, but our fertile years are not that extended and as we near the end of our fertile time, pregnancy is not recommended, just as it is not with the non-magical women. Most witches have their all children by the age of 40 if not sooner, just like their non-magical ‘sisters.’ I had my oldest child when I was 23 and my youngest – your grandmother when I was 30. Your Grandmother’s oldest was born when she had just turned 23 and youngest at 29. Your mother was the youngest of my Grandchildren. She was born in 1963. My oldest was born in 1949. You are the youngest of my Great Grandchildren. The oldest was



about ten years older than you were. As you also know, you are the only one left of my descendants.

"My parents died in 1969. My mother was 89 and my father 92."

"But..."

"They were murdered by what became known about a year later as the Death Eaters – Voldemort's followers. My McGonagall Grandparents were already dead. Anyway, as witches and wizards can live a long time ordinarily, they also have a longer time to either accumulate or squander wealth. The McGonagall's were a very wealthy family..."

"Were?"

"Still are, actually. When my parents died, my sister, brother and I inherited a third of the estate each. My brother promptly moved his family overseas. When my sister's line was wiped out during the last War, her share was divided between my brother and me, although I'm pretty sure my brother's family's share has not been distributed. But that's neither here nor there. After my sister's family was wiped out, my share of my father's estate was thirty million galleons. Admittedly, this is not nearly as much as what Harry and Clarice or Sirius, for that matter, stand to inherit one day for they are from really old money, still it's not a pittance by any means."

"So this is about being rich?"

"Yes and no. You see ... do you know what would have happened if Voldemort had succeeded in wiping out our family?"

Hermione shook her head.

"The law is rather complicated. My brother left the country and took all his money with him. Had Voldemort taken care of the both you and me, my brother would have had sixty days to claim his portion of my sister's share before it became part of my estate and it would pass on according to my will. Now, my will leaves some money for Hogwarts and some for other charities, but the rest is left to my descendants. I



would have changed it if... So, had we ... well ... were I to pass on without no one left behind or designated to inherit, the money would have been split between the Ministry of Magic and each of the members of the Wizengamot. At least a third of those members either were Death Eaters or their supporters. That was one of the ways Voldemort was supporting his war. If there was a line that opposed him, he wiped it out. Now most pureblood lines were split on the war. All he had to do with them was wipe out the opposition to see his supporters enriched and through them his cause. Of course, this policy only applied to wealthier families still..."

"I want you to understand just how bad that war was. If a family had money, any who opposed him were targeted. They killed without mercy and without any discretion. Babies could inherit, so they were killed too. As you know, our line was targeted because we were Founders' Heirs as well – same as the Potters – so we were doubly in danger. Throw into the mix that they wiped out Muggle Borns on principal – and their children and killed and raped muggles both for sport and as part of their initiation rites..."

"That's horrible! Why weren't we taught this?"

Minerva nodded. "The Ministry never let the full horror of that war become general knowledge. All records of that War – the ones that show the full extent of it – were sealed. Your history books do not engage in speculation, but verifiable facts based upon documentary evidence. I would note that the War is still quite ugly even in those texts."

"But not like that!"

"No. Not like that. In 1970, there were about 90,000 magicals in the British Isles according to the Ministry Census. Now that number does not include unregistered Muggle Borns, as in children not yet in magical school. In 1982, that number was a little over 60,000."

"A third were killed?"

"No one knows for certain how many died. Many just disappeared. We know many fled the country and never returned but there is every



reason to believe that many were killed and their fate remains unknown. The known death toll was close to 6,000, almost ten percent of the post-War population. When you consider that there might have been 600 Death Eaters, and that number is only an estimate...”

“Why weren’t we...?”

“Only two magical people aside from your birth parents knew about you, Hermione. I was one and the midwife for your mother was another. She was killed in a random Death Eater terror attack about a week after you were born. As for myself, I seldom left Hogwarts. I only left to visit you and you were relatively safe as the Death Eaters never gained access to the lists of magical children under eleven living in the Muggle World – thankfully. Even then, your magical birth certificate does not identify your birth parents as you were born to an underage couple at Hogwarts. To our world, you are a Muggle Born of unknown parents adopted by the Grangers. Eventually, and only because the Death Eaters would eventually exterminate or enslave Muggle Borns, they would have come for you. But even had they won, it would not have been until you performed underage magic that required investigation or were scheduled for magical school.”

“But what about the wall in the Hall of Records?” Hermione asked.  
“My name is on it!”

“And what’s after the name?”

“The year of my birth.”

“In numbers?”

“No. Roman numerals: MCMLXXIX.”

“We magicals never adopted roman numerals. We wrote in Runes until around the Eight Century and when we transitioned over to the Roman alphabet, we were already using Arabic numerals. They are far easier to deal with than the older form of numbers. Thus, the vast majority raised in the magical world have no idea what those letters mean. Did you look at Harry and Clarice’s parents?”



“Found their Dad. Not his Mum, though.”

“What did his Dad’s say?”

“James Potter MCMLXMCMLXXXI.”

“No space between the years, right?”

Hermione shook her head. “No.”

“And no middle name? No identification of his parents, right?”

Hermione nodded. “No.”

“Is he the only James Potter on the wall?”

“No. There are several others dating back centuries.”

“So the only way to tell them apart is to know Roman numerals and know they stand for dates.”

Hermione nodded. “Um – so you can’t read Roman numerals?”

“I can. It’s not easy for me, but I did learn them. Few bother. Your average Death Eater would not because they are considered Muggle writing. Don’t ask me why the alphabet is not. You will find many inconsistencies in their espoused philosophy which makes what they did all the more tragic and horrifying.”

“Why are you telling me this?”

“Two reasons. First off, as I said to our world you – and Clarice for that matter – are considered Muggle Born even though neither of you are.”

“Why Clarice? Her name is on the wall as Clarice Potter MCMLXXXI.”

“And it’s also under Clarice Jameson MCMLXXXI. The wall includes adopted names for some reason, but not married ones. Thus when



you were adopted, Hermione Granger appeared and as there are no other Grangers on the wall ... are there?"

"No."

"You are seen as a Muggle Born. Clarice Potter is generally believed to have died the night her birth parents were murdered. Only we and her friends know she did not and is now Clarice Jameson. The Pureblood elites did not go away just because Voldemort and his Death Eaters were apparently defeated. They still exist and the prejudice remains beneath the surface of our society. Not all purebloods are that way, but the ones who are ... Despite my efforts and the efforts of other faculty at Hogwarts, some of the children of Death Eaters and supporters continue to be mean to Muggle Borns and espouse the blood hatreds."

"So?" Hermione said. "You think some students will scare me or Clarice? I'll be years and years beyond any of them by the time we are supposed to go, at least any who we did not train. And the ones we are training have to survive Watanabe which does not tolerate that rubbish at all."

"That's not the point."

"What is the point then?"

"The War is not over, Hermione. Voldemort is gone for the moment but we know he's trying to come back. But more important, the ideas, fears and hatreds that gave rise to Voldemort have not died and will come back whether he does or not. The next generation of blood bigots and future Death Eaters is already in school. Scores of little bigots are waiting for their chance to carry on. And let's not forget the last crop of murderers. They may have been defeated, but they never surrendered. Should Voldemort or another Dark Lord arise to lead them to their view of the world, they will rally to him. It won't be like last time. It took Voldemort decades to lash out at the world. It took him decades to build his following and turn them into ruthless killers. He will have those people waiting for him. It will be worse than last time."



“And our people will once again be caught by surprise and it will take time for them to recognize the threat and then begin to deal with it,” Minerva continued. “It won’t matter who the Minister is, the Wizengamot and Department Heads will not believe what is happening and will not shift over to a war footing for some time. We know that is what happened in Sensei’s time and we have no reason to believe it won’t happen this time. That means Voldemort will start his new War with a force of trained killers against a population and government taught that it is evil to kill. Basically, he will start with the War all but won unless...”

“Unless?”

“Unless there are some in this country who are trained in the Art of War and in what War means,” Robert Granger said entering the room.

Hermione jumped. She had not expected her Dad to be listening.

“War is about killing the enemy,” Robert Granger said. “There is no other way about it. It’s about hurting people and breaking their toys. Von Clausewitz wrote that war is diplomacy by other means. Sun Tzu saw no distinction between war and diplomacy as both existed for the protection of the realm and were merely tools in the sovereign’s arsenal. The use of diplomacy could aid in war and war could aid in diplomacy. But the bottom line is that the rules of a peaceful society do not exist on the battlefield where it is the warrior’s job to destroy the enemy’s ability to fight and take ground and hold it.

“You should not worry yourself over what happened last week, Sweetie.”

“You knew?” Hermione asked in shock.

“Sirius told us about a week ago.”

“And you approve?”

Robert nodded. “It was no more immoral than the two horcruxes you’ve destroyed.”



They had destroyed the horcrux that was Slytherin's locket the day they got back from their first mission. They had not seen what had happened to the ring. They had never opened the box it was in deciding not to deal with the remaining two curses if Li Huan's spell worked and it had. It was not like Sensei had described. The locket was not physically damaged at all. But the dark magic that made it a horcrux and bound Voldemort's soul fragment to the earth had been destroyed and without that magic, the soul fragment could not survive. The heirloom of Salazar Slytherin freed of both magic and soul had been returned to the Vault.

"I don't understand. We desecrated graves! We burned down a house!"

"You removed powerful weapons from Voldemort's arsenal," Robert said. "Those graves contained keys to bring him back sooner rather than later. That house had been a stronghold of his in Sensei's time and undoubtedly would be this time."

"But we're not at war!"

"And why do you say that?"

"Cause there's no fighting..." Hermione's voice trailed off.

"The enemy never surrendered. Their ideas never died and still thrive. So long as that is the case, you are as much at War in your world as Her Majesty's Government is at War in Northern Ireland. If you wait for the formalities, it may be too late. It will certainly mean that victory should it come will be far more costly than otherwise."

"Next you'll be saying we will have to kill people," Hermione said. Her resolve was faltering, but her penchant for playing Devil's Advocate had not.

Robert nodded. "In some cases maybe. We already know that there will be a professor at Hogwarts who must die to prevent Voldemort from returning early. Sensei has not told us who that is just in case the timeline changes and the pre-emptive strike is rendered unnecessary. But if the timeline continues unchanged in that regard,



the professor must die. If taking a life today saves thousands a few years from now, that killing is justified and is in the best interests of this country. You know I was S.A.S., right?”

Hermione nodded.

“I can’t tell you a lot about what I did. I can tell you I killed people who were potential threats to this country and at no time were we at war with them or their countries. Many of our ops killed people, but we believe they prevented wars and therefore prevented far more people from having to die. To be the warrior, you must accept as a given that even in perceived times of peace, there will be people who must die to preserve the best interests of your country, your people, your beliefs and Her Majesty’s government. What you lot did last week while ‘illegal’ in the strictest sense of the word, was necessary and in the best interests of both of our worlds, Hermione.”

“So I shouldn’t question...” she began.

“On the contrary! You should. What separates us from the Death Eaters is we do question. We know it is technically immoral and maybe illegal. The acts must be balanced against the threat and the potential consequences of inaction. So long as we retain our humanity, we can never be like those you are fighting against. They have no moral center. They do not question their actions and they kill for no reason other than because they can. They kill innocents for terror. I killed threats – and one day so might you. So long as the enemy has the means and will to fight and stands to do so, they are to be killed. They are to be killed because left alive they will continue to kill.”

Hermione sat and thought for what seemed like a long time. “Do you feel guilty, Daddy?”

“For what?”

“For what you did in the Army?”



“No. I may not have liked it, but I knew what could well happen if we did not do it. Never let an enemy gain strength when you can weaken him. That’s what we did, assuming we could not destroy them.”

“But Harry just went and did it,” Hermione said after some thought. “He just came up with the idea and the others followed.”

“Don’t be so sure,” a third voice said. Hermione saw Sirius had entered the room. “Harry and Clarice came to me with this idea the day after Sensei told us about the second horcrux, Riddle Manor and the resurrection ritual. We discussed the pros and cons for days. All Harry did was acknowledge to us that we had achieved our primary objective – destroying the Horcrux – and we had time to try for the secondary...”

“Why didn’t they say anything to me?”

“You were busy organizing things for that expanded club of yours,” Sirius replied. “They helped, but that was mostly your doing and they didn’t want to distract you.”

“Rubbish!”

“Actually, it was part of their reasoning. The other was that you would raise the very same objections and they felt you might take more convincing than they did. They really did not want the philosophical debate.”

“I thought they trusted me,” Hermione whimpered.

“They do,” Sirius said. “And Harry told me he was sure that if you objected, he would have sided with you.”

“I did!”

“After the decision was made. I told them to keep quiet for the time being, Hermione. If you’re going to be upset at anyone, let it be me.”

“Why did you do that?”



“Because you – because ... Deep down, you are a very moral person, Hermione. Your morals formed in peace do not fit squarely in war. Some people can accept this dichotomy with ease, others need it shown to them or forced upon them. If they told you two weeks ago, you would have fought to stop them. As you said earlier, it is peacetime. Unfortunately, they understood that if we waited for war it would already be too late.

“Was it truly necessary to burn Riddle Manor? Debatable even now. We denied the enemy a base of operations. The main reason for it was to ensure a fire hot enough and vigorous enough to cremate the remains. This needed loads of fuel and that house and loads of fuel in it. Torching it created a bonfire. If there was another way to destroy the bones, we didn't think of it. ... Well, we did, but Fiendfyre was out of the question. Banishing, vanishing and transfiguring them would not destroy them. They could be recovered and then be used by a skilled and brilliant wizard and anyone who thinks Voldemort is an idiot is a fool. The bones had to be physically and totally destroyed and fire is most effective at that. Destroying Voldemort's future base was an added bonus.

“Allowing the bones to remain would give Voldemort access to the Resurrection Ritual. It is both one of the easiest ways for him to come back and one that can be done as many times as necessary provided so much as a single bone fragment remains intact. Moreover, it is the only ritual that requires the blood of an enemy. Voldemort does not yet know about the blood protections on Harry. He does not yet know that without Harry's blood merely touching the boy would destroy whatever body he inhabits or creates for himself. He might never find out, but should we take that chance? Should we encourage the bastard to plot to kidnap Harry for such protections? Should we give Voldemort a free shot at killing Harry as happened to Sensei in his own timeline?”

Hermione shook her head.

“No we should not,” Sirius said. “We removed one of the ways he could return. There are others, but that one placed Harry at risk. Wouldn't you say it was worth it?”



Reluctantly Hermione nodded.

"The reason we destroyed the horcruxes is to see to the eventual defeat of Voldemort and his cause. The reason for the graves and Riddle Manor, while it also aides in that cause, was to protect Harry. Remember, Voldemort is going to go after Harry any chance he can get. We need to eliminate those chances now while he's believed to be dead. Once he comes back, it will be much more difficult to keep Harry safe until we are ready to deal with the evil git once and for all."

"Why doesn't he trust me?" she whimpered.

"Harry trusts you more than anyone," Sirius replied. "If I had told him it was in his best interest to destroy those old bones and you had told him not to, even if you never gave him a reason, he would listen to you. He will always listen to you, Hermione. In many ways, you are his conscience and moral center. But there are times when doing what seems right at this time is the wrong thing to do in the long term."

"But I told him not to!"

"No, you said you didn't think it was a good idea. Luna and Neville sided with me and Harry and you let it drop. Had you said don't do it, Harry probably would have changed his mind. Because he trusts you so much and relies on you as he does, you need to make sure you are right for the right reasons. If he is right and you are wrong and tell him not to do what he believes is right, he will listen to you. He might not like it, but he will. Therefore, be certain. Know all the facts you can and consider the potential consequences. That way, you can be a conscience that does the most good by him and the most good for all."

"Hermione?" Minerva said. "Do you know the purpose of what we discussed?"

"I should think less?" Hermione asked.

Minerva shook her head. "No my daughter. No. Today is the tenth anniversary of your birth. But you are not ten, are you?"



Hermione gasped. "I'm eighteen?"

Minerva nodded. "It's time to start to think like the adult that you are becoming, my daughter, at least about some things."

"Not boys," Robert Granger chided. "I don't want you that grown up yet."

"As an adult, things are not black and white," Minerva finished.

Hermione nodded. They had given her a lot to think about. She decided she would not call Harry out for this one. She had had her chance. But more important, she did not want to damage their friendship over a situation where both of them could be right and both could be wrong.

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 21st, 1989 – THE ROOKERY, OTTERY ST. CATCHPOLE, DEVON, U.K.

Hermione sat watching now nine year old Luna Lovegood opening her many birthday presents although she was not really paying attention. She was not thinking about the conversation she had with Aunt Minnie, her Dad and Sirius the night before. She was remembering the conversation she had with Harry and Clarice that morning before they left for the party.

"We should tell her," Hermione said.

"Tell who what?" Clarice replied.

"We should tell Luna what Sensei told us about her Mum."

"I don't know," Harry said. "I mean he really didn't tell us much at all, did he?"

"He could not even tell him when it happens," Clarice added.

"I know," Hermione said. "Still, she's our friend. We can't keep this from her. We are not much of a friend if we keep secrets from each



other.” This was the closest she would ever come to berating Harry for not including her in the planning regarding Riddle Manor. She noted Harry seemed to shrink a bit.

“When?” Harry asked.

“Today,” Hermione replied.

“What a way to spoil a birthday,” Clarice said. “Happy Birthday Luna! Oh, by the way, your Mum is going to die in a spell crafting accident this year.”

“That’s not what I mean...” Hermione began.

“Then what do you mean, Hermione?” Harry asked.

“First off, you’re right,” Hermione said. “We really don’t know much about what happened in Sensei’s timeline because he does not know much. He told us Luna was nine. A spell her Mum was working on went ‘horribly wrong,’ apparently those were that Luna’s words. She was there when it happened and saw her Mum die. As open as that Luna was, it was the only time she mentioned that. Sensei also described that Luna and she was very different than ours.”

“So?” Clarice asked.

“So,” Hermione said, “I think that Luna felt she was somehow responsible for her Mum’s dying.”

“You mean she caused the accident?” Harry asked.

“No. No, I don’t. That Luna was nine and knew no magic or very little. Certainly that girl did not know as much magic as our Luna does. That Luna did not even have a wand. But raised magical, she may well know what could have been done by a witch with a wand and the knowledge of how to use one.”

“What are you saying?”



"I think that Luna knew that had she had a wand and knew the right magic, she could have saved her Mum's life. Instead she watched helplessly as her Mum died."

"I think Hermione's right," Clarice said in a very soft voice. "I couldn't save my Mum. I still have nightmares about that."

"There was nothing you could have done, Sissy," Harry said soothingly.

"I know. But what if there was and I couldn't do it or didn't know how? Yes, I think that's it. Luna's Mum could have been saved had Luna known magic and had a wand and the poor girl knew it."

"So we tell Luna and her Mum?" Harry said after a long pause.

"Not Jasmine," Hermione said. "No idea what that might do. She might decide not to spell craft with Luna around and..."

"And die anyway," Harry nodded in agreement. "Why today?"

"We don't know when this is likely to happen. Might not be for months and months. It might well be tomorrow. She needs to be ready."

"And so should we," Harry added.

"What do you mean?" Clarice asked.

"We tell Luna what Sensei told us. We tell her what Hermione thinks it means. We also tell her we'll be there for her. All she needs to do is send her Patronus and we'll come running!"

The two girls nodded in agreement.

Hermione knew this would not be easy. The three had agreed that they would be the last of the party goers to leave so that they could talk to Luna. But, if this saved Jasmine's life one day, it was worth it. And if not – well at least they would be there for Luna in any event.



A/N: (1) Yes, the Ring is no longer a Horcrux and is undamaged physically. (2) Yes, they never saw it. (3) Yes, it is still buried in the Gaunt House.

WHY?

I have not decided if the Hallows are going to play a roll in this fic at all.

AND/OR If Harry has the Ring, Dumbledore can get it eventually. Right now, Dumbledore has two of the Hallows. It would not be good if he got all three. So, IF Hallows do come in, no Ring until Harry gets his father's cloak back.

P.S. "AFRIKA" is spelled right. In histories, it is the German Spelling, not English for Rommel's Panzer troops.



## CHAPTER FORTY-THREE: FOUNDATIONS

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1989 – THE ROOKERY, OTTERY ST. CATCHPOLE, DEVON, U.K.

Luna Lovegood was a girl of many talents. However, she was also not inclined to show off and reserved those talents to herself and those whom she considered close. In this regard, Sensei would agree that the Luna he had known in his timeline and the nine year old girl lying on her back with a palate in one and and paint brush in the other were very similar.

Sensei, however, had only truly discovered one of Luna's many talents; the only one she developed further after her mother died aside from magic that is. Sensei never learned just how good a writer that Luna could have been. True, that Luna had published major works on magical creatures all of which Sensei had read. But that Luna and this Luna at this age wrote stories as well. This Luna's writing teachers in Japan had commented favorably upon this talent and had encouraged her. Her friends had even read some of her stories and liked them, encouraging her even more.

Sensei had heard the other Luna humming on numerous occasions. But Sensei had never been shown the musician that was just beneath the surface. While Harry and Hermione – and Clarice for that matter – were very good musicians, Luna was a natural. She had an angelic singing voice and picked up instruments like Neville picked up interesting plants.

The one artistic talent Sensei had seen was the one she was working on now. She was also an exceptional painter for her age, and some would argue for any age. In Sensei's timeline, that Luna had painted the ceiling of her room on the top floor of the Rookery with portraits of herself and her five friends – a painting that was destroyed not long after Sensei had seen it. That Luna had been fifteen or sixteen when she adorned her ceiling.

This Luna was doing something very similar, yet it was also very different. She lay on her back adding the newest detail to a mural that covered the entire ceiling – one she had been working on for almost a



year. Laying on her back was probably not an accurate description. There was no scaffold to hold her up, rather she was using magic to levitate herself.

At the center of the ceiling of her large bedroom were five “larger than life” figures. The truth was, Luna painted the five as life sized, or at least as they would be when they were a few years older. In the center of the ceiling was the first figure she had painted. It was of a young man just over six feet in height with short, jet black strait hair that seemed to defy both logic and combs, piercing green eyes and glasses. The young man was lean and confident yet with a warm smile. To his left he was holding hands with a young woman. She was at least three inches shorter than he was with long, chestnut brown curls that flowed past her shoulders, warm deep brown eyes and a smile that the subject of the portrait would not even believe. Next to her was the shortest person. She was a little less than two inches shorter than the other young woman with long, wavy blonde hair, large and pale blue eyes and an observant yet comfortable expression. To the young man’s right was another young woman, the tallest of the three women. She was shorter than the young man by over an inch, but had the same eyes and same color hair. She was smiling, but clearly had the most serious expression of the five central figures. To her right was another young man, the tallest of the five. He a sandy blonde with brown eyes and was broader than the central figure looking better built for Rugby than Football and had an easy going manner on his face, yet an expression that exuded confidence.

All three of the young women were that – young women and not girls. Luna would admit she had taken more than a little artistic license as neither she nor they would know for certain how they would develop. None of them were girl like, yet none were over sized caricatures of the female anatomy either. This was how Luna saw herself and her four best friends in about ten years time, a time frame she picked because she believed they would be friends for a long, long time so why paint them as children?

She had finished these portraits around or just after Christmas and, as big as they were, there was still a lot of empty space in her “canvas.” She then began painting a background to the left of the blonde. Although she did not know it at the time, an art critic might



consider it impressionistic. It was also a montage of sorts featuring mostly London. There was the Rookery, which arguably was out of place, but there was also Potter House, Big Ben and the Houses of Parliament, Tower Bridge and the Tower of London (complete with an overly large Beefeater given the scale), Nelson's Column, Harrods, Buckingham Palace (again, with an oversized palace guard in the red coat and bearskin hat) and the dome of St. Paul's in the background of the background. In the foreground of this background were three figures who seemed to be looking at the five. Upon closer inspection and if the viewer knew what they were looking at, they would see her parents and Neville's Gran.

She had two whole weeks after she returned from Japan to work on the other side of the picture. Here, the buildings were those she had seen in Kyoto, including the school as well as a pagoda, the ancient imperial palace and more than a few shrines. In the background was Mt. Fuji. She knew that it was nowhere near Kyoto, but it was part of her experience and that of her friends as well, so it was included even if out of place. There were five figures on the Japanese side, all of whom had been to Japan and four had lived there at the school with them: The Grangers, Minerva, Sirius Black and his fiancé Sophie.

She had other plans for the rest of the ceiling – one day. "Above" the main part would be clouds and blue sky and she planned to include subtle faces in those clouds. They would be of Harry and Clarice's birth parents, Hermione's birth parents and Clarice's adoptive parents for certain. Neville's parents were a maybe. Luna knew that Clarice and the others – but mainly Clarice as she was a Healer now – were going to try and cure them one day and until that day, room had been left on the Britain side for them.

Luna also wanted to include their common animagus forms and patronuses or patroni. She really could not remember which term was proper right now. She was going to start on that, but she had been inspired by her talk with Harry, Hermione and Clarice last night and was working on that inspiration. The rest could wait.

Luna and Neville were on a very short list of people who could see an old man who called himself Sensei. Luna knew who and what he was and knew he was a Harry Potter from a different timeline; different,



but not yet totally foreign. It was like having a sort of seer who could tell one what might happen, although not necessarily what was certain to happen. Luna had hoped to include him on the ceiling, but how does one paint someone only a few could see or even knew existed.

Be that as it may, Luna paid attention to the old man when he chose to speak to her or around her or even about her. True, when he spoke about her, it was not really her but the Luna he had known in his timeline – a Luna who would not have these friends for several more years.

Harry and the others had spoken with her just after the rest of her guests left last night. They had told her what Sensei had told them. In a way, it was disturbing. If the timeline held to its former path, sometime between now and her tenth birthday, her Mum would be involved in a life threatening if not fatal accident while spell crafting. Sensei's Luna had watched her mother die, being too young to do anything. Sensei did not know how or when it happened or whether anything could be done to stop it. Luna's friends had told her what he had told them.

Luna thought about it for a long while after getting Hermione to tell her precisely what Sensei had said about the accident and reflecting on some of his anecdotes about the Luna he had known and especially that Luna's father.

"Thanks," Luna said finally.

"Thanks? That's it?" Harry asked.

"Aren't you worried?" Hermione added.

"Of course I'm a little worried," Luna said. "But knowing this I know a couple of more things."

"Such as?" Clarice asked.

"First off, if I am there and she can be saved, I know I can save her or at least get help fast. You guys promised to help and if you must



know I was the best in my class with the Patronus Messenger. If she can't be saved, well it will be very different this time."

"Why?" Hermione asked.

"Because this time I will have friends. Sensei's Luna did not, not for another five or six years. You'll be there for me and will help me through it and that way I can help Daddy through it. Sensei's Luna could not and her Daddy went 'round the twist a bit. There are similarities between that Daddy and mine, but differences. Does my Daddy talk about made up conspiracies? Yes. Real and plausible ones? Yes. He knows the difference and makes some up because they make Mum laugh. Sensei's Luna's Daddy stopped seeing the difference. I can see that. My Daddy loves my Mum (and me for that matter) more than anything and losing either of us would be a blow.

"But this time, I will both be prepared and should the worst happen, I will have friends to help me so I can help Daddy."

"Are you going to tell your Mum?" Harry asked.

"Probably not," Luna replied. "It won't stop her from spell crafting. She loves it too much and since we don't know what she was working on – or will be working on – we can't give her a good warning. Most likely, if she knew she wouldn't want me around when she works, which defeats the purpose of telling me, don't you think?"

The others nodded in agreement.

"Thanks in advance," Luna said with a smile, "regardless of how it turns out."

Her brush strokes were adding a thin and delicate gold chain to her portraits. It was to surround them in a circle, neither binding them nor allowing the five friends to separate. It was comprised of two words in flowing script repeated over and over again: "Friends Forever."

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 25th, 1989 – POTTER HOUSE, LONDON, U.K.



It was now one month to the day since they had set out on their "First Mission." Hermione was seated on a stone bench in the now dying garden behind Potter House, the place that had been her home for over a year, a home she shared with her parents, her two best friends as well as Remus Lupin and Sirius Black and very soon Sirius's bride. The weather had turned chilly as it did this time of year and rain threatened but was not yet falling. Hermione was out here for some quiet reflection over what had been both the worst two weeks of her life.

It had begun with that Mission. They had destroyed a horcrux and eliminated the means by which Voldemort had returned in Sensei's timeline. Yet despite the success of the mission, she had returned both hurt and furious. Harry had refused to listen to her. He seemed to have this spur of the moment idea to rob graves and burn down an admittedly abandoned house and refused to see reason, refused to see it was wrong and refused to listen.

She had been so angry with him. But she also tried to hide that fact from him and everyone. A part of her did not want to get into a row with her first and best friend, but she could not get past the feeling that he did not respect her or her feelings. During the week following their return, she did speak to Harry, but she never talked to him. She thought she was doing a good job of hiding her anger from everyone until the day before Luna's birthday. Still, while she thought everyone was none the wiser, she was in pain. She did not know why. She missed Harry, even though she saw him every day, she missed him terribly. But she could not bring herself to talk to him and work it out. Stubbornly, she felt he should apologize to her.

After the talk with Minerva, Sirius and her father, she was no longer angry with Harry. She was now ashamed of herself and now really could not bring herself to talk to Harry. The pain she felt before was nothing compared to what she now felt. She had let him down in a way and that was the worst and loneliest she had ever felt in her life. The best day in her life was when Harry asked to be her friend the day after he first woke up in hospital. She had treasured that day and every day since and she was now losing all of that and did not know how to fix it.



For the next week or so, at least when they were not working with the Weekend Warriors or planning for the expansion of that club that was to occur beginning the first weekend in October, she spent hours on this bench away from everyone crying. Her stubborn sense of morals had cost her. Her naiveté had cost her. Her stubborn nature had cost her. All she was had cost her all she cared about. How could she fix it? How could she make it better? She was not sure it could be fixed or ever be the way it was. In a way, she was right.

“Hermione?” she heard Harry’s voice call softly. He was probably standing next to her or near her, but she refused to look up. Her eyes were red from tears and she really didn’t want him to see her crying.

It took Harry some time, but as he was not about to let Hermione go on the way she had been, he eventually got her talking. She told him about how she had felt and about the Talk she had with the others and how she now felt. She told him she had ruined everything she had ever had and ever wanted and had no idea how to make it right.

“Ruined?” Harry asked. “I’m here, aren’t I? I still want to be your best friend, Hermione. I still need you to be mine.”

“How can I be? I ... you ... trust ... Why didn’t you? Why didn’t you?”

“What? Tell you what I was thinking of doing?”

Hermione nodded.

“I wanted to. I need you that way. You see things I miss and ... well, you’ve had a far better moral upbringing than me.”

“H-how can you say that?”

“Cause it’s true in a way. Before you and your parents, I lived with my Aunt and Uncle. Not models of appropriate behavior or interpersonal relations...”

Hermione actually laughed a little.



“When Sensei told us of that Resurrection Ritual, I knew I wanted to stop that from happening. I did not know the bones were there until that day, but I wanted to be ready if they were. I also wanted someone to either come up with a better plan for achieving the same end or talk me out of it. I knew, Hermione, I knew if I spoke with you, you would have talked me out of it on the moral grounds. I needed more! I needed someone to tell me it would not work regardless or something. I knew if you said don’t do it I would not have. But what if it was the only way?

“I mentioned it to Sirius and Clarice, not you. I am sorry, but...

“Sirius was for it from the start. Not much advice there except how to get at the bones. Clarice was not against it, unless it was futile. She set to researching the ways Voldemort could come back and better the curse we know than one we don’t, right? My goal was to deny him an excuse to come after me as a part of his plan to come back – to deny him the protections of my blood and my mother’s sacrifice. But what if that ritual was not the only way for him to achieve that end? Then it would not be worth it.

“Clarice found out there were seven ways for him to come back. One was for one of his horcruxes to steal the life force from another witch or wizard...”

“As happened to Ginny in Sensei’s timeline?”

Harry nodded. “One was through the use of the Elixir of Life as a catalyst in a complex potion...”

“Again, a plot in Sensei’s timeline.”

“One was the Resurrection Ritual that required his ‘father’s’ bones, flesh of a servant and blood of an enemy – me.”

“And the others?”

“One is a ritual that requires a recent corpse and reanimates the corpse as a host for his disembodied soul.”



“That could mean you, couldn’t it?”

Harry shook his head. “Not really. The corpse must have died of natural causes. A murdered corpse will not work as it is magically unclean. Thus in most cases, it is an elderly person and I doubt Voldemort would want to come back as a frail, old man even if he was just as powerful magically. Kind of hard to be the terrifying Dark Lord if you need a walker...”

Hermione laughed a little at the image.

“Another, and the only one that will bring him all the way back to his old self requires a ritual that reintegrates his entire soul. This has a drawback. If any soul fragment is lost, it cannot work. There is also a reason why Voldemort would never try this...”

“And that it?”

“First of all, with his soul again intact, he is quite mortal. All his horcruxes would have to be reintegrated. But most important, he could never make another horcrux again, thus he remains mortal.”

“But if he had the Elixir of Life?”

“It does not grant true immortality,” Harry said. “I don’t think anything does...”

“But...?”

“With the Elixir, you never age and can never die from age, illness or even starvation, thirst, cold, drowning and such. But your body is not indestructible. Destroy the body and you die. Cut off the head, burn it, gut it, blow out the brains or heart, and it dies just as any other. I’m forced to assume he knows that and would rule it out.”

Hermione nodded. What they knew about him would rule that out. “That’s five.”



“There is a ritual that allows the soul to take over another person – to possess him permanently...”

“Didn’t that happen in Sensei’s time?”

“No,’ Harry said. “Voldemort possessed a professor, but it was not the same for the professor remained. The ritual cannot work on a magical person. It must be a Muggle or Squib as they lack the magic to resist. Or, to be more accurate, they have no magic that will prevent the transference. That professor may have wanted to be Voldemort for all we know, but the magic would have prevented it otherwise why was Voldemort after the Stone?”

“Makes sense,” Hermione said. “Sounds like an easy one, if you ask me.”

“Probably the easiest,” Harry nodded. “But we can probably rule it out too.”

“Why?”

“Since the body he would inhabit is not magical at all, to make it work he must give up half of his magic. He basically must dilute his magic with fifty percent Muggle. It would render him an average wizard in terms of power and somehow I don’t see him as accepting average.”

“Me neither. And the last one?”

“Requires a magical person and is similar in concept except he would retain all of his magic and gain a boost from the departed magical person’s magic. He replaces that person’s soul with his own...”

“But how is that not like possessing the professor? Couldn’t he use you for that?”

“No,” Harry replied. “I am way too old.”

“But you’re nine! Or seventeen or whatever.”



“Way too old. Must be a newborn. No more than a couple of weeks old at most.”

“Where would he get that?” Hermione wondered mainly to herself.

“I’m sure he might be able to find a Death Eater who would be willing sire the bastard,” Harry said.

Hermione nodded. “And he would be years away from returning, right?”

“Actually, according to Clarice, the infant would grow physically and magically at a grossly accelerated rate. A couple of years, three at the most, and he would be at full maturity both ways and then age at a normal rate.

“Provided he does not get his grubby paws on the Stone and we destroy that Diary, by destroying the bones, he only has the last option as his realistic one. The reason I left the graves open (and by the way, they are charmed so that they reopen if anyone tries to fill them in) is so that he knows the Resurrection Ritual is not an option. He will be forced to go for the final one – one that does not involve me at all.”

“But a baby?”

“Most all of these rituals require at least a blood sacrifice if not a death, Hermione. The Elixir potion requires the fresh blood of one whole human. The Resurrection Ritual was botched in Sensei’s timeline. The blood of the enemy was all the blood, not a few drops. Basically, there is no way for him to come back without someone dying at least in spirit. And he must come back to be destroyed forever.”

“I don’t like it, but ...” Hermione began. “There really is no other way?”

“Not that we’ve been able to find,” Harry said. “I was not going to let that opportunity with the bones get away. But if you can find one that renders the others moot before someone is actually at risk...”



“Better the bones than a human life,” Hermione said.

Harry nodded in agreement. “And if you cannot find an alternative?”

“Voldemort must be destroyed,” Hermione said. “That point was driven home. Daddy said that in war there will always be some collateral damage. The just warrior can only minimize it. If we can...”

“We should,” Harry finished for her earning his first hug and kiss on the cheek in a fortnight or more.

“Still, a child? Moral issues aside, how do we know, how will we know? How will he get such a child? In addition to murder, there is kidnapping and the pain to the child’s family and...”

“Actually, that won’t happen, Hermione. Not really. As I said, each ritual requires a sacrifice. Most, including this one require two. He cannot just kidnap any magical baby. The baby must be offered to him to be his vessel willingly by a natural parent and before the child is born. This means innocent families and the orphanage are not at risk.”

“That’s sick! Offer your own child?”

“According to Sirius, many did during the War, although not for that. Sirius’s parents first offered him to the Death Eaters as a future recruit. When he went Light on them, they offered Regulus in his stead. This is but an extension of that vile practice; a practice many Dark families did last time without batting an eyelash.”

“So what is the probability Voldemort can find a willing parent?” Hermione asked. “All his Death Eaters have been dealt with, right?”

“All the known ones,” Harry said. “All the active ones from the last War are either dead or in prison. Remus says that Office W believes they represented maybe half of the total. During the War, whenever a Death Eater was killed or captured, another trained one came seemingly from nowhere to keep the ranks filled. It frustrated the hell out of anyone trying to take that group down.



“Office W knows that there were never more than 182 active Death Eaters at any one time. Thirteen were ‘Inner Circle,’ the team Captains and such. 169 were rank and file killers. Anytime Death Eater was killed or captured, another person suddenly appeared and took their place. His organization was like the Hydra – a mutli-headed vicious beast that should some hero hack off a head, two grew in its place. Moreover, there were many Death Eater moles who either were or still are within the Ministry or Wizengamot who were never active once they took the Mark. Whenever a Sleeper Death Eater (that’s what Office W called the Death Eaters who were not actively engaged in terrorist acts) whenever one was activated, another Sleeper was initiated. There seemed to be a queue waiting to join up. Few if any of the Sleepers were ever caught or even identified, so there are a fair few still roaming free and who could be rallied to or used by Voldemort upon his attempted return.

“Even if they never were active, they are all vile. Despite what many active Death Eaters led people to believe, you cannot become one by force. No form of compulsion magic will work. The magic that marks a Death Eater and binds them to Voldemort is both Dark and requires a voluntary act of free will.”

“What kind of act?” Hermione asked.

“Murder. Muggle or Magical, it doesn’t matter, but the initiate must kill whomever they are told without hesitation and as their own free and voluntary Act. A fair few of those who were said to have murdered their wives and children while under the Imperious Curse may well have been undergoing Death Eater initiation rites.”

“But they were under such curses,” Hermione said.

“When they were caught,” Harry nodded.

“Oh!”

“I learned a lot in the last month or so, Hermione. I learned about the rituals in the couple of weeks leading to our Mission when I was afraid you’d easily talk me out of something that deep in my gut I



knew was unpleasant but necessary. The last two weeks when you were avoiding me, I learned even more from Remus and Sirius about the last War and the Death Eaters and am convinced our little bone burning was not only necessary but benign as compared to what we may have to do in the future.

“Whether we like it or not, whether you believe that prophecy or not, I am and will be Voldemort’s primary target. I can’t change that so long as he exists. In some ways this gives me an advantage as I know he’s coming and have time to prepare. It also means I will be in the best position to kill the bastard even if I do nothing. But you know the problem of doing it too soon.”

“Horcruxes,” Hermione said.

“Exactly. Until they are all gone, I can’t risk that encounter. The wards on this house and the probable ones you, Luna and I can raise at Hogwarts one day can protect us from an attack – probably indefinitely. But hiding can’t stop him from returning or his minions from reforming and plunging this country back into civil war. Moreover, even after the last of his horcruxes is gone, his mortal self remains sufficiently protected that to seek him out or allow him to seek me out would be suicide. Until all his protections are destroyed, I and we can’t win.”

“All of his protections? What other protections could he have?”

“His Death Eaters,” Harry replied. “Between Office W, the Ministry and others, some 452 Death Eaters are either dead or in prison. But remember, for every active Death Eater lost, there was a spare Sleeper activated and a new one marked. In the active force, there were thirteen leaders and for each of them thirteen followers hence the 182 total. Voldemort was into numerology. Office W suspects that for each of the 182, there were seven or thirteen spares. Given the magical population of Britain at that time, it was most likely seven. That’s 1204 marked Death Eaters at the time the war ended. That means we cannot account for 752 of the bastards. Some were probably foreigners. Others may have died by now from other causes. Still, that leaves Voldemort with a large force from which he can



reconstitute quickly once he returns. He can't be defeated without wiping them out."

"What are you suggesting Harry?"

"To defeat Voldemort once and for all, most of his minions must be dealt with."

"As in killed?" Hermione asked.

Harry nodded.

"When?"

"Not any time soon," Harry replied. "We're nowhere near ready at all."

"Ready?"

"First off, only you and I are combat Defense Masters. Only ones in Britain I've been told. We are capable of killing with and without magic..."

"In theory."

"True. But even if it were in fact, we can't do it alone. Good way to end up dead if you ask me. We need loads more."

"There may be one day."

Harry nodded. "But not for a while. Next year there will be eleven more when Clarice and Group '89 get their Defense Masteries..."

"Group '89?"

"Those who started Watanabe this past summer. You, Clarice and I are Group '88. See?"

"There a reason for this Group thing?"



"I'll get to it," Harry said. "I came out here for two reasons really. One was 'cause I want my best friend back. I miss you."

"I missed you too, Harry."

"The other – assuming I have my best friend back..."

"A safe assumption," Hermione chided. "For now."

"We got the lists from the other schools."

"We did?"

Harry nodded. "They'll send their groups first weekend in October. Anyway, the other schools aside, Group '90 has thirty right now and '91 thirty two. As you know, Group '90 has kids who are in their first through fourth years at either Hogwarts or St. George's. '91 are between the ages of seven and ten right now. Well, we got fifteen each from the other four schools who are first through fourth years and another fifteen each – younger brothers and sisters mostly – between seven and ten and three each aged six, Group '92 for now."

"We should probably let some six year olds from our Hogwarts and St. George's communities join up," Hermione said.

Harry nodded in agreement. "Anyway, right now our Muggle Borns either were in school last year or have older brothers and sisters who were in school last year. Both Minerva and Professor Fleming from St. George's school want to add about six more First Years each – all new Muggle Borns – twelve total to Group '90. Many have younger siblings – 19 more to group '91. That's 42 in Group '90 and 51 in Group '91 without adding in the other schools.

"Throw in the other schools and Group '90 will send 102 students to Japan starting next year. That's 102 additional Defense Masters by August 1991 or 115 total. Group '91 currently has 111 total, but that number will increase by next fall as next year's new Muggle Born families are identified. Figure around 150 for planning purposes. '92 will be less as we'll only be getting the First year's who are the oldest in their families and their younger siblings. Still, it could go as high as



90 by the time they start. So, by August 1993 we could have as many as 250 or more Defense Masters.”

“You’re not suggesting a bunch of kids fight this next War,” Hermione said in some shock.

“Physically,” Harry nodded. “But all of us will be adults by then.”

“Time Compression?” Hermione asked.

Harry nodded. “In Sensei’s timeline, Voldemort became physical again in June of 1995. I’ve actually calculated our assimilated ages as of September 1st 1994, well before that time. Assuming we do not attend Watanabe after the summer after next, you will be thirty-one on that date, I’ll be thirty and Clarice will be twenty-nine. Even if they only do two summers, everyone in Group ’91 will be at least eighteen by then. Anyone in Group ’92 who did all three summers will be in their twenties. Group ’93 will all be at least sixteen by then in assimilated years, most at least seventeen. That’s at least three hundred or more Defense Masters who are legally adults under our law.”

“And your assumptions?” Hermione asked.

“The youngest in any Group is seven when they start Watanabe.”

“In other words older than Clarice?”

“By a few days, yes.”

“So we’re building an army?”

“I assumed you knew that was a possibility.”

“I did. Just not so soon.”

“1994 is a ways off, Hermione. Nothing soon about it. But that’s the earliest I think we might actually have to do something other than stop Voldemort’s first two attempts or destroy Horcruxes. It will probably be later, maybe even after Groups ’94 and ’95 have started.



Regardless, having a trained force is not enough, unless all we want it to wait for the enemy to come to us.”

“What do you mean?”

“While we will be safe in enclaves such as here, to defeat the enemy and minimize his ability to achieve his ends, we will have to seek engagements. I can’t say how just now and might not be able to for some time. We lack any intelligence that can readily identify targets other than the one we destroyed last week. At some point, we will need to begin gathering intelligence and compiling target lists so when the time is right, we can have the maximum effect.”

“What sort of targets?”

“Death Eaters,” Harry said.

“Fight them?”

“I’d rather shoot them in the back, to be honest.”

Hermione nodded. “Underhanded, but safer for the shooter. Probably won’t be able to do that in all cases...” she then laughed.

“What?”

“Two weeks ago I would be livid at the suggestion. Here I am now advocating assassinations for lack of a better word. Then again, given how one gets the Mark...”

Harry nodded.

“One question,” Hermione began, “why you? Why us? Why not leave this to the adults who are supposed to do this stuff?”

“That’s more than one question,” Harry teased.

Hermione shrugged. “So sue me.”



"I don't know about you, Hermione, but I have little faith in the adult wizards and witches to do what is right by all of us. They did such a brilliant job last time. I've heard nothing to tell me that all but a miniscule fraction of them will do any better than last time."

"Still..."

"Who does that leave? It's left to us, to our generation, to those who have hope for the future and still believe anything is possible. In the past it was an old man's war and a young man's fight. Not this time. This is our war, our fight, for it's our future that will be determined. If not us, then who? If not now, then when? I read that somewhere once."

"And after?" Hermione asked.

"After what?"

"After the War is over, after Voldemort is dead and his Death Eaters dead or defeated, what then?"

"I don't honestly know, Hermione. Haven't thought that far ahead in any detail."

"But?"

Harry sighed. "Okay, maybe I have a bit. Assuming we win, do we really want to leave the world the way we found it? Even with them gone, the conditions would remain that would one day mean our children or grandchildren would have to go through it all again. I don't truly know what to do to fix it yet. Even if I did, it's not my place to fix it but all of ours, don't you think?"

"So, first Voldemort then a revolution?"

"Someone once said a revolution every now and then can be a good thing," Harry replied with a smirk.



“Sensei did say he wanted us to study British Magical History and Government between now and Hogwarts, provided we could find accurate and competent sources,” Hermione nodded.

“And Sirius found us one,” Harry said with a smirk.

“Really? When? Why didn’t you tell me?”

“He told me not long before I came out here so I am telling you.”

“Who?”

“Well, in addition to the Potter Journals...”

“And the ones Aunt Minnie has,” Hermione added.

“...it looks like you, Clarice and maybe Neville, Luna and I will be spending a lot of time with Lord Black. Seems he’s quite the critic of the official histories and government.”

The conversation continued for a few more hours until the two were called in for dinner. Hermione would one day look back upon her talk with Harry as the day their relationship was both restored and strengthened far beyond what it had been before. They were now far more than best friends in some ways and while neither Harry nor Hermione noticed it at the time, the others who lived in Potter House smiled as the two walked into the Dining Room hand in hand once more.

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 1st, 1989 – CAMP W WEST OF WINDSOR, U.K.

The previous week, some sixty-two children had showed up at Potter House to learn magic from the thirteen British Watanabe students. Those sixty-two had learned the Club was changing location to a new place called Camp W. They all arrived by floo just as they had the week before and found themselves in what looked like a large gymnasium. They also found that they were not the only children present. All told, some 253 children ranging in age from six to fifteen



were now milling about all just as confused in many ways as the others.

There was a raised platform at one end of the gym in front of which were six desks. As the children wondered what was going on they saw a tall, blonde haired young man walk onto the raised platform. He was wearing what looked like trainers and khaki trousers and a thick, blue jumper unlike any many had ever seen before because there were things on his shoulders. The ones closer could see a strip of red cloth on each shoulder with two white or silver stripes, one at the shoulder and one just next to it running from the front to the back. Above the two stripes was a silver crown, but no one could see it from the floor. Beneath his jumper was a collared khaki shirt with the collar points outside the collar of the jumper. Only a few could see the number '89 on the right collar point. On his left arm below the shoulder was a white rectangle bisected both horizontally and vertically by a red stripe forming a cross.

"Right you lot," the young man said in what must have been a magically amplified voice, "for those of you who have been with us before, welcome to the new home of the Weekend Warriors. We will still get into London from time to time and still use Potter House, but most of the time we'll be here. For the rest of you, welcome to Camp W, the new home of the Weekend Warriors.

"I am Jason Evans and I will be one of your instructors here. I was born seventeen years ago and am twenty-one and change years old. If you can see the stripes on my shoulders, this means I have taken and passed the International Standard O.W.L.s and N.E.W.T.s. Three of your instructors are one stripers, having passed their International Standard O.W.L.s. The oldest of those three was born nine years ago and is thirteen years old. Three of your instructors are three stripers, having passed their International Standard O.W.L.s, N.E.W.T.s and attained a Masters Certification. The youngest of those was born eight years ago and is sixteen years old. First lesson here: don't let anyone's apparent age or size fool you!

"Right then, let's queue up! Hogwarts in front of Table 1, Perkins Academy Table 2, St. Albans Table 3, St. Andrews Table 4, St. George's Table 5 and St. Patrick's Table 6! This is the last time your



school matters here and the order is purely alphabetical. Once you're checked in, you'll be given a room assignment in the dorms through that door," Jason pointed, "boys dorms up the stairs to the left, girls to the right. You'll find your wardrobes are already assigned and your kit waiting. Change into what I am wearing then proceed to the ground floor for further orientation." Right then, queue up!"

"What about us?" a girl asked. Jason immediately recognized one of the Patil twins. "We don't have a school!"

"Patils and Changs Table 1," Jason said.

"But that's Hogwarts!"

"And apparently, that's where you'll be assigned when you turn eleven."

"How did you know that?"

Jason smiled. "We have our ways."

About two hours later, over 250 young people dressed almost exactly alike were eating in a large cafeteria on the ground floor of the dormitory. They learned that there were only minor differences in their clothes.

The patches on their arms were flags. The one like Jason's was the flag of England. There was a light blue one divided by a white "X" which was the Scottish flag. Another was similar. It was mostly white with a red "X" and had been the Irish flag over two hundred years ago and was worn by those few from Northern Ireland. There was the green, white and orange tri-color of the Republic of Ireland. Finally, there was the white over green flag with a red dragon – the Welsh flag which everyone thought was the coolest of the lot.

Their collar insignia stood for the year they were slated to start school in Japan. Those years ran from '88 to '92.

The shoulder straps also had meaning. Closest to the collar was an insignia that stood for their schools: a silver "H" for Hogwarts, a silver



shamrock for St. Patrick's of Ireland, crossed silver swords for St. Andrew's of Scotland, a silver castle for St. Albans of Wales, a silver crown for St. George's in London and finally a silver anchor for Perkins Academy, said to symbolize the island and seafaring peoples of England. Aside from the Watanabe students, all then had either a thin silver or black stripe just below the school symbol. Black was for those in their first year as Weekend Warriors, Silver for those in their second. Obviously, most were black stripes. Many had chevrons below their stripe. These were the children already in school. The First Years all had a single black chevron with its point pointing away from their collars. Second Years had a single silver chevron. Third Years had a black chevron over a silver chevron. There were a few Fourth Years with two silver Chevrons. They were told as they ate this was just to let people know where they were in their education. Once they went to Japan and finished a summer, they'd wear the boards like the instructors with stripes for O.W.L., N.E.W.T. and Masters.

When most had finished eating, three young people, each with three stripes on their shoulders stepped onto a raised platform.

"Welcome," a dark haired boy with glasses said. "My name is Harry Potter. I hold a Masters in Combat Defense Magic and will be one of your Senior Instructors. With me are this year's other Senior Instructors: Hermione Granger who also holds a Masters in Combat Defense and Clarice Jameson who is a certified Healer. As Instructor Jason Evans told you earlier, your age and school do not matter here. The only thing that does is what you know and don't know. We are here to increase what you know and can do and decrease what you don't know and can't do.

"All of you will be learning magics here that are either not taught in Britain or are poorly taught. This will include wandless magics, nonverbal spell casting and the mind magics, among other things. You will also be taught non-magical martial arts and other things all to ensure that you can do well in Japan. I can assure you, this is perfectly legal – right now.

"However, especially for those of you in school, we don't want word of this group spreading around. There are many in this country and in



the Ministry who would have a fit if they knew you were learning stuff that they cannot do. It is important they don't learn of us until it's too late for them to do anything. Otherwise, we will be just as uneducated as they are and as they want all their children to be.

"Moreover, the only rule that will get you kicked out of here and deported from Japan without exception is this: bigots are not tolerated. You'll find no Death Eater fans here! Any of you think you are better than anyone else because of your 'blood status,' think again! That is your ticket to leave – after being obliterated of course! You will note there is nothing on your jumpers that advertises blood status. The only status that matters here is witch or wizard, not how many of your ancestors were.

"Right then, when your name is called, form up with the person calling out and we'll continue the orientation..."

The Blacks



## CHAPTER FORTY-FOUR: LORD BLACK

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 13th, 1989 – POTTER HOUSE, LONDON, U.K.

Sirius Black paced nervously before the front door of the house awaiting his guest. He did not know what made him more nervous, his wedding which was only two days away or this guest. No, that was not true. He knew it was this guest. As much as he admired the man in a way, the man was more than a little enigmatic. The man had the uncanny ability to seem invisible and quite visible at the same time and to appear to be on both sides and no sides at the same time. While Sirius doubted there were many who considered the man a friend, there were none who truly saw him as an enemy, which might explain why the man was still alive at eighty-nine having lived longer than any male in his family in centuries. All the others had died untimely and in most cases unnatural deaths.

The doorbell rang promptly at nine in the morning and after letting out his breath, Sirius opened the door revealing the old man.

“Grandfather,” Sirius said with an attempt at a smile.

“Sirius, it is good to see you.”

“I – I’m rather surprised...”

“If you think I was going to miss watching some young woman make an honest man out of you...”

“Ah! Actually, I thought you never left the Manor.”

“Yes, well there is that. Generally safer there than anywhere else, although I have it on good authority that no enemies will be present. And it’s not like I never leave, I just need a really good reason to and this reason ranks way up there, lad.”

“Thanks.”



“Don’t thank me. Thank the lovely lass who finally settled you down. So, are you going to invite me in?”

Sirius looked around nervously before nodding and standing aside. He let out a breath as his grandfather crossed the threshold unmolested by magic or anything else.

“Thought the wards would do a number on me, did you?” Lord Arcturus Black said.

“Erm ... well, there are family blood wards on this place,” Sirius said.

“Really?” Lord Black asked in genuine surprise. “Exceedingly rare, illegal and dangerous, yes?”

Sirius nodded.

“Dumbledore’s doing no doubt,” Lord Black mused. “That bastard never saw the law as binding on him. Well then, I am still alive – although had I met an unfortunate end, I would still be the oldest Lord Black in over three centuries,” he added with a chuckle. “Obviously, as eccentric as many believe I am, I am no threat to those who reside beneath this roof. And I can remember Harry, Clarice and Hermione! Wonderful!”

“How?”

“The Wards let me in, Sirius my Lad! That means they’ve lifted for me. And that means neither Harry nor Clarice consider me a threat and I am not one. Ergo, like you and some other adult witches and wizards, I can now remember one Harry Potter. Wonderful!”

“It is?”

“Do you know how annoying it is to be reintroduced all the time?”

“Er – can’t say that I do.”

“Well it is. My, my! I see they’ve done some redecorating at some point.”



“Excuse me?”

“Surprised? Yes I have been here before.”

“I didn’t know...”

“Never came up. Yes. It’s been a while though. The first and last time I was here at Potter House was when Cousin Dorea married Charlus. Around 1940 or so, but then again, never been up on dates. I do remember the Muggles were at war at the time. Now, where is the lovely blushing bride, or are you hiding her from the mean old man?”

“This way,” Sirius said nervously. Lord Black had yet to meet his Sophie.

Sirius led his grandfather to a large parlor at the back of the house that had huge windows overlooking the gardens beyond. As the elderly gentleman entered the modestly appointed room, he spied a young woman staring out one of the windows, no doubt this Sophie that had stolen the affections of the Heir Apparent. Lord Black smiled momentarily at the thought as he felt his grandson had earned the right to be happy the hard way. He seldom smiled, certainly when anyone was watching as it would ruin the stern image he had built up around himself. But, this vision might be entitled to see the real Arcturus Black – provided she was not some society denizen, which he doubted as Sirius had never been into that, or a brainless bint who was all looks and no substance, which he feared as Sirius had dated more than a few of those in his youth.

Lord Black cleared his throat and the young woman turned around. In the older man’s opinion, she was a stunning woman, but lacked the vapid expression common among Sirius’s former girlfriends. This one had a mind. He silently chuckled as he was not sure his grandson could handle an intelligent woman, then again, the lad probably needed to be handled and not the other way around.

“You must be Sophie,” Lord Black said kindly. “And my grandson was most remiss, I’m afraid.



The young woman suddenly looked very nervous. "Sir?"

"He utterly failed to do your beauty justice," Lord Black added with a smile as he took her right hand and bent to kiss it stopping just short. As he stood up he added, "Then again, Sirius was never known as the loquacious sort, much less for having a well developed sense of vocabulary. A poet he most certainly is not, less you count his inane limericks."

"Hey!" Sirius protested. "I said she was beautiful!"

"Roses are beautiful Lad. But there are roses and then there are roses. There are beautiful women and then there are those whose beauty and elegance might inspire poets and artists for generations to come."

Sophie blushed furiously. "Surely you exaggerate, sir."

"Perhaps," Lord Black said, "but only a little."

"Is there a reason why you did not kiss her hand?" another voice asked and Lord Black saw they had been joined by two children. For the first time, he recognized them immediately.

"Ah! Harry and Hermione," he said with a slight grin. "And a most intelligent question – fitting given what Sirius has asked me to teach you and Clarice this year. And where is she by the way? I've never seen you except together."

"Working," Harry replied.

"Really?"

Harry nodded. "And Hermione's question? You are aware that the reputation of certain members of your family precedes you and Sophie is a Muggle Born."

"So you think it was a slight on my part?" Lord Black asked.

"I don't know."



"In polite society it is considered rude in the least to kiss the hand of an unmarried woman. Although, it seems that rule of etiquette has been forgotten. I can't recall the reason for it although I seem to recall it had something to do with her virtue. Duels have been fought over the implied sight when some simpleton kissed the hand of a maiden thereby implying her virtue was in question."

"Wizard thing?" Hermione asked.

"Actually no. That particular archaic rule of etiquette comes from the Muggles of old and was adopted by wizards. Fair few of the Pureblood Traditionalists seem to know that many of their traditions in society are actually derived from the court etiquettes of Muggle Europe."

"So what you did is a sign of respect?" Hermione asked.

"And proper courtesy and decorum," Lord Black replied. "Sirius has told me that young Sophie here is quite the accomplished young witch. That more than birthrights should determine one's place in society. A healer, am I correct?" he added looking at Sophie.

She nodded. "I completed my basic certification last spring. This summer in Japan, I obtained my specialization in Internal Healing."

"Really? And that is...?"

"The diagnosis and treatment of both magical and physical disease for the most part," Sophie added. "My major paper was an initial analysis on the effects of 'Pureblood' culture on subsequent generations."

"Let me guess," Lord Black said, "progressive reduction in magical potential leading to increased non-magical births until said line loses its magic?"

"Not in all cases," Sophie said. "But if they marry too close to their own bloodline for long enough, that is the end result. The why aside from the obvious answer of inbreeding is a more complex question



begging for further study. Unfortunately, Britain is one of the few places where this phenomenon can be studied.”

“Because Britain is one of the few magical cultures where the notion of magical heritage has been perverted into the notion of ‘Pureblood,’” Lord Black added with a nod.

“Really?” Hermione asked.

“We’re not the only one. There are other European cultures that are similar, but none I fear as much so as here. Disgusting when one considers it. Never understood that notion at all as most of the most ardent supporters of such nonsense are only of recent magical decent. Harry? I know you’ve checked. How far back can you trace your magic?”

“I’m not a Pureblood,” Harry replied.

“That’s not what I asked,” Lord Black said. “How many generations can you go back where at least one of your ancestors was magical?”

“Depending upon the line, between forty-three and over fifty. Clarice and I have lines dating back to the tenth century although the Potter line can be traced back to the seventh for certain. My father was a pureblood only because the Potters married that way within the last seven generations or so.”

“Indeed,” Lord Black said with a nod. “We Blacks can trace our magic back to the Ninth Century for certain. Now, if you look at the majority of the Pureblood Elitists and families that produced the bulk of the Death Eaters, most cannot trace their magic back more than fifteen generations and almost all are purebloods only by the strictest meaning of the word – all Great-great Grandparents were magical. My Grandfather falls into that category as his Great Grandfather was technically a Half Blood, the son of a Black and a Muggle Born witch.”

“So all this Pureblood stuff is rubbish?” Sophie asked.

“Falsehoods built upon falsehoods,” Lord Black agreed. “It’s been around for centuries, but its importance in society has waxed and



waned. The most recent rise in this false world view can be, unfortunately, traced to my Grandfather who discovered the then popular Muggle fixation with a similar notion called Eugenics."

"What's that?" Sirius asked.

"A fake science popular in the nineteenth century," Hermione said. "It postulated that Western Europeans were a superior race of humans and was then used to justify their global empires and right to rule over and dominate all other 'lesser' cultures. It was eventually further perverted in Germany and used to justify the extermination of other cultures by the Nazis in the 1940's. It too has no basis in reality."

"Exterminate?" the Blacks asked.

Hermione nodded. "The Nazis killed over eleven million men, women and children whom they considered inferior. They had factories set up to execute them, thousands per day. Over six million were Jews. The rest were Slavs, gypsies and others."

"A fate that would have awaited the Muggle Borns and a fair few others had Voldemort and his Death Eaters gained power," Lord Black said darkly.

Sirius nodded. "The nutters locked up in Azkaban said as much adding all but select Purebloods would be and should be slaves."

"That's horrible," Hermione said.

"And foolish," Lord Black added. "Such a society has been tried at least once before and it failed miserably in the end."

"Who? When?"

"An ancient city state in Greece called Sparta. At their height, they were the most powerful state in that part of the world with an army their neighbors both near and distant feared. In the late Fifth Century B.C., they led a coalition in a protracted war with their most powerful political and military adversary in the region, Athens. They won the war in the end.



“Now the Spartans were unique amongst the numerous Greek city states. Only about twenty percent of their population were Spartans. The rest were Helots, slaves taken in their numerous wars throughout Greece. Needless to say, the slaves were not happy as while Sparta was ruled by and for the Spartans, it was for all practical purposes run by the Helot slaves.

“When a Spartan child was born, an elder evaluated that child’s fitness to be a Spartan. Those deemed unfit as either potential soldiers or potential mothers of soldiers were abandoned as newborns and left to die. The survivors became Spartans.

“The boys entered a brutal military school around the age of seven and remained there for at least ten years. Many died in the school. To graduate, the boy had to kill a slave and get away with it. Needless to say, the slaves were not happy and revolts against their lords common and bloody, hence Sparta’s need for all Spartan men to serve for decades in their Army.

“As I said, the Spartans won a war and found themselves in control of much of Greece. While great warriors, they were terrible at running Greece and succeeded in angering their former enemies and allies alike. A great alliance of city states rose up against them and threatened to invade in 371 B.C. The Spartan Army marched out and met their enemies in battle at a place called Leuctra. While outnumbered, the Spartans won, but at terrible cost.

“In the aftermath of the battle, the Helots rose up. This time the revolt could not be contained and what was left of Sparta the military state was overthrown by its own slaves. While Sparta remained, it was never the feared power or any kind of power again.

“This is precisely the kind of society my Grandfather envisioned – a society led by a small elite of ‘acceptable’ wizards with all other serving as slaves. Sparta was able to maintain such a state so long as its army remained intact and in control. Once it was decimated, Sparta was no more. Voldemort and his ilk would have failed even more spectacularly in the end for as brutal as they were; they were not a professional warrior class. The Death Eaters wanted to rule



over all, but did not want to defend all, which is what they would one day have been faced with. Throw in the Muggles whom they failed to consider at all, and the result would have been a disaster for our world. The scary part is just how close they came to succeeding in bringing us to the brink.”

“And which side were you on, Lord Black? If I may be so bold,” Sophie said.

“May I assume that the reputation of the House of Black – or at least certain members of the Clan – precedes me?”

Sophie nodded.

“For lack of a more definite definition, I was on no side except arguably that of the long term interests of my House, which I can assure you are economic and not political. I saw the Pureblood cause as bad for business and what was bad for business was bad for House Black. On the other hand, as the modern Pureblood Supremacist movement in Britain was at least in part a creation of my Grandfather and was spread amongst the dissatisfied Pureblood families during his tenure as a professor and later Headmaster at Hogwarts, I was expected to continue to carry that unpalatable torch. Not to do so would have set me up for assassination, just as doing so had seen my father assassinated in 1952, nearly two decades before Voldemort and his Death Eaters began making trouble.

“I found myself standing upon a most uncomfortable razor’s edge in our recent history. To support the Pureblood agenda would lead to the economic ruin of a fortune and maybe my death, to oppose it would lead to my death and the use of my family’s fortune to fund what I saw and still see as a suicidal cause. The only way to reserve the real thousand year legacy of what had at one time been a highly reputable House was to do nothing that would cast suspicion. The Pureblood Elites considered me one of theirs, even though I never once supported their cause in word, deed, galleon or thought. Their opponents viewed me as a misguided yet harmless supporter of the Elites, even though I never was. As a member of the Wizengamot from one of the last remaining Ancient and Noble Houses, the Magical Government was sure I was in their camp, even though I only



attended a handful of sessions prior to 1970 and none thereafter. Basically, everyone thought I was either for them or not really against them.”

“Sounds like you hid under a rock, so to speak,” Sophie said.

“As far as the wizarding world is concerned, I most certainly did,” Lord Black said with a smile. “But, there’s more to this world than wizards, isn’t there?”

“Muggles?”

Lord Black nodded. “As Head of one of the remaining Ancient and Noble Houses, I am bound by an oath and Treaty my distant ancestor signed with King Richard the First. My first and primary loyalty must be to the sitting British Monarch and her Government, particularly where the other witches and wizards pose a threat to Her Majesty.”

“Okay, you lost me.”

“Prior to the reign of Richard the First, magic was not unknown to Muggles in the British Isles. While there most certainly were tensions between the two peoples – mostly instigated by the foreign Church to which we refused to bow, hence our being declared heretics and such – we mostly fell under the King’s protection. That means no cleric, lord or commoner could take action against us or our lands without the King’s leave.

“The King was under great pressure both within this Country and from without to lift his protection. At that time, Western Europe was sending armies to the East to fight the Saracens, also considered heretics. The foreign Church wanted all heretics dealt with both within the lands under its dominion and without. The local nobility wanted magic for their wars. We wizards wanted none of it.

“My distant ancestor was then a member of the King’s Court and proposed a compromise. If the leaders of the Magical Clans – the forerunner to today’s Wizengamot - agreed to hide magic from the Muggles, keep the King’s peace within our lands and amongst our



people and remain forever loyal to the Crown, then we would be granted the right to rule ourselves as we saw fit.

“The treaty bound the signatories and their heirs in perpetuity. At the time there were three hundred magical Clans throughout the British Isles.”

“There are three hundred votes in the Wizengamot today,” Sirius noted.

“Indeed,” Lord Black said. “One vote for each Clan. The seats are hereditary and generally pass from father to son. Should a Clan leader die without a son to succeed him, that Clan lost its vote and the vote either went to a surviving Clan or to the highest bidder. In later generations, surviving clans sold their seats to cover debts or left their seat to a witch, ending that Clan’s claims forever, as well as ending its oath to the reigning Monarch.”

“How many remain?” Harry asked.

“Twelve of the original Clans survive: The Ancient and Noble Houses of Abbott, Black, Bones, Diggory, Fawcett, Longbottom, Lovegood, Mercer, Potter, Prewett and Weasley. However, of those only the Blacks, Bones, Longbottoms, and Potters retained their hereditary seats.”

“And what happens if a Clan Head violates the oath? Did it happen to your Grandfather or any other Black?” Hermione asked.

“As to your first question, it was a magical oath.”

“They and their descendants would lose their magic?”

Lord Black nodded. “And their lands and estates. As to the second, you must engage in acts of treason or war against the Crown to violate the oath. Being a bigoted idiot does not count. Unfortunately, from my standpoint, my Son and many of the heirs at law to the Clan Head were openly engaged in or supporting war or treasonous acts back in the 1970’s. My son supported such acts, although if you ask me that was mostly his wife’s doing.”



“Mother was a real piece of work,” Sirius said.

“Anyway, I knew that the Head of House could not pass to my son without all Blacks losing their magic. In my opinion, many of them deserved such a fate, but not all. By law, I could skip him altogether and leave the Clan to one of his sons or, if they proved unworthy, to any worthy male descendant of any of my father’s siblings.”

“Why not a witch?” Sophie asked.

“Leaving it to a witch would break the oath. We would not lose our magic, but we would be free to be Death Eaters and bigots without immediate magical repercussions. Another of my concerns was the Black fortune. The Death Eaters wanted it, but as Head of House I control it. Unless a member of the House has their own independent wealth, they live on an allowance – one which I determine and one which I made sure was too little for them to support Voldemort and live the life they expected. The Death Eaters knew this and made at least four attempts at my life believing that if I died, my son would inherit and they would get our fortune to fund their war.

“But, the law allows me to disown a natural heir, which I did. In my will, the next Head of House must be a male descendant of either myself or one of my Black Aunts or Uncles, but may not have been sorted into Slytherin House or have ever taken the Dark Mark of a Death Eater and must be willing to swear on his magic never to support any Pureblood agenda however benign it might seem. When I made that amendment to my Will, there were only three males in the Black Clan who qualified as my successor: Sirius, Harry’s Grandfather Charles (who is descended from my Uncle Cygnus’s daughter Dorea Potter nee Black), and Arthur Weasley (who is descended from my Uncle Arcturus’s daughter Cedrella Weasley nee Black). (Interestingly enough, Arthur married one Molly Prewett whose Uncle Ingnatius Prewett is my son-in-law.) I ruled out Arthur Weasley, though.”

“Why?” Harry asked. “I mean we know some of his kids and they seem alright.”



“He works for the Ministry for Magic,” Lord Black said. “Ignoring the fact that the Magical Government is a major reason why the War happened in the first place, the requirement for the next Lord Black is loyalty to the Queen. As the Ministry does not recognize her sovereignty over them, that would be a problem.”

“They don’t?” both Sophie and Hermione asked.

Lord Black shook his head. “The signatories did or were supposed to. The rest of their Clans did not and, of course, most magical in Britain today – including most of the Purebloods – had no magical roots dating back that far.

“As for being a reason for the last War, let’s just say I have no respect for the Ministry and by extension little for any who choose to work there.”

“I was an Auror, you know,” Sirius said.

“In their combat arm,” Lord Black replied. “By the time you were certified, the climate had changed. By then, however, it was too little too late. And might I add, you don’t work for them anymore?”

“No.”

“While what I am about to say does not apply to all Ministry employees, it does apply to that organization as an institution. The Ministry is not about governing, per se. It is about protecting the interests of the members of the Wizengamot, Purebloods and its senior officials in that order. The rest of the Wizarding World is to be placated and kept quiet. The Ministry controls the Press, stifles education and free expression, bans ‘subversive’ books and outlaws certain magic. In my opinion, the laws exist to keep the vast majority of witches and wizards ignorant and weak. Should the average witch or wizard achieve their full magical protection, the Ministry would be unable to maintain control and would lose its monopolies on power.

“If you want an example, you need not look any further than the Death Eaters who all but took over during the last War. The total number of Death Eaters and their supporters might have numbered



2,000 at their height. There were at least that many at the Ministry and over 60,000 'fully qualified' witches and wizards, most of whom would have known enough magic to resist had they been educated elsewhere. Yet, with less than 200 active Death Eaters, they almost won the War in no small part because the magical government refused to give up its monopoly on information, magic and control until it was too late. And, once the threat had passed, they went back to business as before.

"I take it you have a low opinion of our government," Sophie said.

"Any sane person would," Lord Black replied. "At least anyone who actually knows what is going on. A government is supposed to serve its people. Our magical government serves itself and maybe the fifteen percent of the population who can claim Pureblood status. The remaining eight-five percent of the population – over fifty-five thousand people excluding children – are of no consequence. For years during the last war the magical government ignored all attacks on Muggles by magical, be they Death Eaters or just idiots. They also ignored most attacks on Muggle Borns as many lived in the Muggle world and were therefore 'outside of our protection.' Rubbish! They were and are quick to send reaction teams out into the Muggle world to obliviate Muggles who might have seen magic, but can't spare trained personnel to help Muggle Borns in danger of magical attack?"

"Yet by your own admission, you didn't do anything either," Sophie said. "You're head of an Ancient and Noble House and while much of your family ran amok..."

"I would have been killed and the Head of House would have been a Voldemort supporter had I taken a stand one way or the other. Lesser of two evils really. Besides, it's not as if I did nothing. Both the Death Eaters and their supporters and the government thought I was someone they could talk to. They did, and I listened. They all trusted me and told me things that they most certainly should not have when you consider that anything they told me was in the hands of the Muggle government within a day or less."

"You were a spy?" Sirius asked.



"I was hardly sneaking around stealing secrets," Lord Black said. "I merely told others what they told me. Call me a targeted gossip," he added with a smirk. "Besides, you're one to talk, Sirius considering you are going to work for the people I used to talk to about what I or my wife heard at a party or tea..."

"So you were upholding the oath of your ancestor?" Sophie asked, "The oath to King Richard the Lion Heart?"

"Indeed," Lord Black replied with a smile. "Subtly, I will admit, but I was indeed upholding said oath."

"I still don't see how that is possible," Hermione said. "We had to study English and British History in school. Richard the First was a Plantagenet of the Angevin Dynasty. Since then there have been several other families on the English and later the British throne: The Houses of Lancaster, York, Tudor, Stuart, Hanover, Saxe-Coburg-Gotha and most recently Windsor. Different families! How could the oath continue? Was it to the King, whomever he may be?"

"It was a magical oath," Lord Black replied. "It cannot be so open ended. It is always between one person and another or one family and another."

"My point! There have been different families!"

"Along paternal lines, this is true but..."

"But," Harry said, "magic is not restricted to paternal or maternal lines only."

"Exactly!"

"So, all the Kings and Queens of England and Britain were related along maternal lines?" Sophie asked before Hermione could open her mouth with a similar question.

Lord Black nodded. "Since William of Normandy..."

"Who?" Harry asked.



“William the Conqueror,” Hermione said.

“Oh.”

“Since then, every king or queen who has ruled England or Britain as Monarch has been descended from the same mother: Matilda.”

“Who?” Harry asked again.

“Not William’s wife,” Hermione added.

“Indeed,” Lord Black said. “Matilda, the wife of William of Normandy is the mother of all the monarchs of England and Britain since. So...”

“So the oath your ancestor took still holds since the blood of Matilda still flows in the veins of Queen Elizabeth?” Sophie said.

“Exactly.”

“Okay, now I’m confused,” Harry said. “Grandfather, if you are bound by a magic oath of loyalty to Her Majesty, one which if broken would cause your line to lose its magic, why is it then that the actions of members of your Clan during the last War have not triggered the penalty?”

“Good and valid question,” Lord Black replied. “It is possible that their actions did not rise to the level of treason or a direct threat to Her Majesty and her people, although the latter is not likely. Killing Muggles for sport is a threat. My understanding from my ancestors’ journals is that the oath is particular to me. So long as I or any of the other heirs abide by the Oath, our magic is safe. Although I do assume that an implied expectation was and is to keep the Clan in line. Although they may not know it yet and if not shall not until I pass on, I have in my will disowned all who supported Voldemort and his cause.”

“Why not do it now,” Sirius asked.



“To prevent any subsequent Lord Black from undoing it – not that I think you would, Sirius. Were I to do it in life, it can be undone by me or by others. If, on the other hand, I do it in my Will as a condition of inheritance, it cannot be undone legally or magically. That is a major reason why I have never disowned a Black nor recognized any such disenfranchisement by any of my relations. If I do it, when I do it, it will be irrevocable.”

“And who’s on your list, if I may ask?” Sirius asked.

“Let me think – it’s not like I keep my Will on me, you know,” Lord Black replied. “My daughter and her husband – your Aunt Lucretia and Uncle Ignatius are not. She was an elitist in her youth but married into the Prewetts who are under the Oath. Ignatius is the last of that line, regrettably as they had no children and are not likely to have any. Lucretia is 69, you see,” he explained. “Even for a witch, that’s way too old.

“Your parents did me the great favor of dying, so no need to disinherit them. Same’s true for your brother Regulus. Never saw him as a Death Eater.”

“That was Mother’s doing,” Sirius said.

“No surprise there. She was Uncle Cygnus’s granddaughter and that line was mostly dark. Your Grandfather Pollux and Grandmother Irma will be disowned as well as your Grand Aunt Cassie. Harry’s Great-grandmother Dorea would not have been and neither will Harry. Your Uncle Alphard won’t be. He never met a Pureblood elitist he liked. He hated your mother. Pity he never married. Your Uncle Cygnus did me the favor of dying years ago, pity his wife and some of their vile spawn did not. Bella is out as is Cissy...”

“As far as I know she’s not marked.”

“She married a known Death Eater and he still lives. Had she killed the git in his sleep, I might feel more accommodating, but alas she bore his demon spawn for a son. I will NOT have a Malfoy with even



a remote claim for my House! Now Andromeda is the exception. She and her daughter are not to be disowned."

"Why not?" Hermione asked.

"You know her daughter," Sirius said. "It's Dora Tonks."

"Okay, I can see that," Harry said. "I mean her not being a Pureblood elitist..."

"Her Dad's a Muggle Born," Hermione began.

"I know. She's also too nice," Harry added.

"I disowned all of my Aunt Belvina's line. There wasn't a decent one among them. Six Death Eaters! Six!

"Uncle Arcturus was a real piece of work and his wife's entire family should be put out of our misery. But their three daughters married well. Callidora married Harfang Longbottom..."

"Any relation to Neville Longbottom?" Harry asked.

"Grand Uncle, I believe," Lord Black said. "That whole line died in the War – Harfang's that is – although Callidora is still alive somewhere. I'm told she left the county about ten years ago. Cedrella married a Weasley and her only surviving child – Arthur – is the opposite of a Pureblood elitist. I guess you could call him a Pureblood apologist."

"I thought you didn't like him," Harry said.

"Never met him. All I've said today is he will not be named as my successor because as Lord Black he cannot work for the Ministry for Magic and serve the Crown at the same time. But from what I've heard, he gives the Elitists in the Ministry fits. They've tried to sack him several times. It would seem he knows more people than they do. I wonder if he's kept track of the number of Ministry pricks careers he's had a hand in ending... So no, I won't cast him out of the Clan nor his family.



“Finally there’s Charis. She married a Crouch, which was an acceptable Pureblood family in my opinion. Her daughter is dead, but her granddaughter is a Bones – the last of that line and they are bound by the Oath so they are safe. Her son and his son, however, are out. The son was the Ministry bastard who locked Sirius away without a trial. That rotter’s son was a Death Eater, so they are out.”

“That’s most of the Clan that’s out,” Sirius said with some surprise.

“Embarrassments the lot of them,” Lord Black said. “I always have wondered what things might have been like if my Grand Uncle Sirius had not died at age eight. He was the oldest and with his death, my Grandfather became the heir apparent. Even though the vile git was only six at the time, it would not surprise me to learn that he murdered his older brother. I believe Great-granddad suspected that, if the hints in his journals say what I think they do.”

“Lovely family,” Sophie said. “I hope you’re not trying to scare me away.”

“Is it working?” Lord Black said with a mischievous smile.

“Nope.” She smiled.

“Oh my,” Lord Black said with a laugh. “All this time I’ve been talking about nonsensical things...”

“Actually, I found it quite interesting,” Sophie said.

Sirius looked worried. “You’re still going to marry me, aren’t you?”

“Don’t be silly! Of course.”

“I still wish to apologize for monopolizing the conversation,” Lord Black said. “In my humble defense, I submit I keep myself cooped up in my Manor and seldom entertain. Far rarer is mixing with company I enjoy such as now.”

“Well, we’ll just have to see about changing that, won’t we?” Sophie said.



"Thank you, Sophie. And for what it's worth, may I welcome you to the family?"

"Thank you, er – what should I call you?"

"Grandfather works for me," Lord Black says. "Everyone I like calls me that – and oddly aside from Remus Lupin and little Clarice, they're all in this room."

"Grandfather then," Sophie said with a smile.

"Hopefully, there will be more people you can add to that list when this weekend is out," Harry added. "Oh no!"

"What?" several voices asked.

"Well, there will be loads of witches and wizards here on Saturday," Harry replied. "You remember us now, don't you Grandfather?"

"Indeed I do. I am so glad I won't have to make your acquaintance every time we meet."

"Well, doesn't that mean the wards have failed?"

"No Harry. It does not. What it means is I am now admitted through your wards. Only those admitted can recall you and Clarice and what they may have known before. But I can also assure you, I recall each of our meetings which were all outside of the context of your fabled past and the real Harry I find is a much more interesting young lad than the one of the former fables."

"But even if they didn't fail," Harry said, "there will still be loads who know of me! We know there are people out there who have an 'unnatural' interest in me, even if they cannot remember it right now. What if one of the guests accidentally says something to the wrong person?"

"Won't happen," Sirius said.



"You seem to have a lot of faith in people, Sirius," Lord Black said.

"Only one of my ancestors, Grandfather," Sirius replied. "One of the journals describes these wards in some detail. Sophie knows about Harry in part because he told her and mostly because he trusts her. She knew about Harry before coming here. The same was true for Remus, Minerva and I and, to a lesser extent David Greengrass who will be one of my bosses. I cannot betray Harry because I'm his magical Godfather. Remus is bound by an oath he took to help protect James and Lily's children. Minerva is Hermione's blood relation, so that family thing is going on there and Harry has trusted Hermione and her family from the first. Sophie loves me and I love her and I dare say Harry may have seen that before either of us. Implicitly, we all know Harry's predicament and the need to keep quiet, not than anyone else would believe us if we didn't.

"But we have also passed through these wards. Basically, one of the side effects is we cannot betray knowledge that is not known to the public at large regarding anyone who lives beneath these wards. So, the guests who manage to be admitted will be similarly affected."

"Besides," Hermione said, "you hardly seemed worried regarding the Club. There are almost 230 members who know about you."

"Er..." Sirius began.

"What?" several voices asked.

"Well, they've all passed through these wards as well. They are similarly affected. Almost like a House Elf, they cannot betray Harry or Clarice's secrets which is why they can attend their schools without us having to worry. No one who passes through the Wards can reveal anything to anyone who has not passed through these wards. Pretty useful that."

"What about the members that have never been here?" Harry asked.

"Er.."

"Sirius?" Harry asked with mild annoyance.



"In order to get to Camp W the first time, I had all of them come here first."

"Why?"

"Two reasons. The wards would have excluded any undesirables as in any who would be inclined to be a threat or reveal secrets. Secondly, those who made it through became bound by its protection."

"Brilliant," Hermione said.

"I wish you had told me," Harry added.

"I forgot?" Sirius replied.

"I doubt that."

"It was Remus's idea?"

"That I can believe. Why did you do it?"

"It was my job to protect you when your parents died and I failed you. When you helped get me out of Azkaban, I vowed that would never happen again. We all did: Minerva, Remus and I all felt we had failed you and Clarice."

"And," Sophie said, "if you think I would let him fail again, you're mistaken, Harry. You, Hermione and Clarice seem like younger brother and sisters to me and ..."

"Thanks Sophie."

"What's this Club thing?" Lord Black asked.

Harry and Hermione explained about the Watanabe School and their Club that was preparing many others to attend.



“Bloody hell,” Lord Black said sometime later. “You three children, who are all too young to buy a wand here much less attend one of our schools, already have your O.W.L.s and N.E.W.T.s and a Mastery?”

They nodded.

“And in a few years or so there will be hundreds like you here in Britain?”

They nodded again. “All will get a Mastery in Defense and at least one or two others,” Harry said.

“Not to mention University Degrees,” Hermione added.

“That’ll turn the Ministry on its ear once it gets out,” Lord Black chuckled. “A few hundred or more young people educated outside of their control, each more than capable of taking on an Auror, all educated in a system that would be illegal here since the Ministry does not want people to know what you’re learning, I hope to live to see the day when they find out they’re no longer the only show in town as it were. So you said Clarice is working?”

“She’s a Basic Healer,” Harry said.

“St. Mungo’s?”

“That would be hard to explain,” Hermione replied. “She’s working two or three days a week at a Healing Clinic run by Her Majesty’s government for the magical who work there and their families.”

“In other words, her patients are witches and wizards who are not loyal to the Ministry and generally do not interact with the general wizarding population,” Harry added.

“And you really are older?” Lord Black asked.

“Hermione’s technically eighteen right now,” Harry replied. “I am seventeen so we are both legally of age at least as far as the Statute of Secrecy and that Reasonable Restriction of Underage Sorcery



Statute are concerned as they are about age and not birthdays. But, biologically, we are as we appear.”

“So you cannot claim your inheritance? Am I right?”

“That law specifies eleventh birthday, not age eleven. So I have to wait about two years.”

“Interesting.”

“I’m back,” a new voice called and Clarice soon entered the Parlor plopping down on a couch. “Wow!”

“What?” Harry asked.

“Believe it or not, I delivered my first baby today! It was amazing! Maybe I’ll do that for Advanced Specialization. Oh, and don’t be surprised if we get more requests from families wanting their kids to join our Club, Harry.”

“I kind of figured that might happen. Make sure they send the requests through the right – er – channels.”

“They have our number,” Clarice replied. “But I did tell any who asked to wait until next week or so to call. Little busy around here what with the wedding and all.”

Harry nodded.

A silvery rabbit popped into the room surprising all. The children immediately recognized it. A scared voice of a young girl was then heard. “HELP!”

Clarice jumped up as Harry and Hermione looked at each other and paled slightly.

“I’ll get my kit,” Clarice said and she immediately vanished.

“Stave?” Harry asked Hermione.



“Shrunken and in its holster, you?”

Harry nodded. “Wands?”

Hermione nodded.

“Let’s go!”

The two children also vanished from the room.

“What just happened?” Lord Black asked.

A/N: Yep! Cliffy! Did it to get me to update faster next time...



## CHAPTER FORTY-FIVE: A SAVING PEOPLE THING - THE BEGINNING.

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 13th, 1989 – THE ROOKERY, OTTERY ST. CATCHPOLE, DEVON, U.K.

The recently turned nine years old blonde girl with pale blue eyes descended the spiral stairs from the top floor of the tower. She was still dressed in her night clothes and could hear the melodic sounds as her mother hummed a tune while cooking breakfast. As she had since she first could walk down to breakfast on her own, in other words as long as she could remember, she held her favorite stuffed unicorn in one arm. The only outward sign that she was not the little girl she once had been – aside from her size which was average for her current age – was a wand which she had tucked behind her right ear.

Luna Lovegood was a little lost in thought, which was not an unusual situation for the observant and reflective girl. Those who did not know her would assume she was either a brainless twit or lost in some perpetual daydream, for she seemed to have a faraway expression when she was not involved in course work, reading or conversation. The fact of the matter was she was always thinking. Almost everything she had ever seen or heard had triggered a thought exercise for the girl. Sometimes they led to ideas, more often the thought led nowhere or were lost to the Nargles or Wrackspurts or whatever other invisible beasts there were that could befuddle even the most sharp of minds. Sometime the ideas led to expression, more often they were stored in her mind for potential future use.

Ever since her friends had told her about what had happened to Sensei's Luna in another timeline, she had gone to bed each night both thankful that nothing had come to pass and worried that perhaps the next dawn would bring the feared event. She hoped that this timeline would truly be different and not only would she not have to experience the death of her mother, for years her inspiration and best friend, but that the event that had killed the other Luna's Mum would never happen at all. She also hoped that if that event was as inevitable as the sunrise, this time she was prepared to prevent the worst outcome from happening.



The problem with the warning was that it had so little information. She had done her best to hide her true reaction from her friends when they told her that there was a chance that her Mum would have a terrible accident sometime this year that might well prove fatal. She was honest when she told them that she believed no matter the outcome, this time it would be different because she had such good friends who would be there for her. Still, this did not stop her from worrying both about her Mum and about whether she truly could do something to save her if the worst should come to pass.

Each day was a victory. Each day was another day with her Mum, which Luna was determined to make the most of just in case. She had not told her Mum what her friends had told her because she agreed it could make things worse. She truly believed that if her Mum had an accident spell creating, her Mum's best chance at survival was if someone was there when it happened. Her Daddy was busy with his work with the Quibbler. She had her own activities that took her away from home, most notably the Club and the days she would spend with her friends just being as normal a nine year old girl as the second best O.W.L. student in her year could be. She had subtly expressed her concerns to her mother and all but extracted a witches oath from her Mum that there would be no spell creation without someone else near at hand, just in case something happened.

She had actually begun that campaign well before learning about what had happened to Sensei's Luna. It began with a letter home not long after the beginning of her Fifth Term at the beginning of her Third Session (equivalent to Third Year in British Schools) when she started Arithmancy. Arithmancy was a key art in spell crafting and her Professor was an accomplished Spell Crafter in his own right. It was not uncommon for magic professors to show and tell students about the dangers of misuse or misunderstanding of the arts they were learning and this Professor had a whole slide show on what can go wrong if a person Spell Crafts without adequate training. In that Professor's opinion, and Outsanding N.E.W.T. in Arithmancy is just the beginning. To go out in the world with just that and attempt to become a self taught Spell Crafter usually resulted in ... The pictures of mangled bodies were deliberately blurred, but Luna had had nightmares for weeks imagining one of them was her self-taught Mum.



The nightmares had returned after learning about Sensei's Luna.

"Morning Sweetie," her mother said just as Luna entered the kitchen. Her mother removed a pan from the cook top and slid some eggs onto a plate.

"Morning Mummy," Luna said with a yawn as she took her seat at the small table the family used for breakfast.

"Didn't sleep well again?" Jasmine asked.

Luna shrugged. "The dragons were chasing me again to keep me from finding the Snorkacks," Luna said matter-of-factly. The truth was she had that dream as well, but it was not the one that had kept her up.

"You need a Knight in Shining Armor."

"Oh, he was there," Luna replied, now being creative, "but as there was another damsel in distress and I seemed to be doing well enough on my own, he told me to kick it in the privates and then went off for the other one."

"I hope you don't know that Knight," Jasmine chuckled.

"He looked a lot like that politician Daddy's hates."

"And which one would that be?" a male voice asked. Luna saw her Dad enter the kitchen. "There are so few truly reputable folks in our government after all. Morning Snow Flower."

"Morning Daddy," Luna said brightly. "I was thinking of the one you said should have gotten the sack and didn't."

"Cornelius Fudge," Xenophilus Lovegood said. "I'd love to know who he bribed or blackmailed to keep his job. Kept his pet toad on the rolls as well. There are days when I wish I had as loose a notion of journalistic integrity as the Prophet, but once you go there, you never come back."



"Besides," his wife said, "you have more important things to write about, don't you Dear?"

"Indeed! Got the exclusive on the first wedding of an Heir Apparent of an Ancient and Noble House in over a decade! That and you should see the guest list! 'Tis a pity some of the more interesting stories have to wait, but I should have a record run in any event."

"More interesting stories?" Jasmine asked.

"For one, that school in Japan! That would raise eyebrows, especially if I could reveal the numbers of families who are thumbing their nose at the establishment. But I agree, it is not yet time to expose the rotten House for what it is. But, you will read it in the Quibbler first!"

"I take it you'll be at the paper today?" Jasmine asked.

Her husband nodded as he swallowed some eggs. "Yes. I want to finish typesetting the unrelated stories so I can focus on what I learn this Saturday for the final print. And you Dear?"

"Unless Luna has other plans, I got an idea for a spell I want to work on. Do you have plans today, Sweetie?"

"No Mum. Clarice is working and Harry and Hermione have to stay around for the early guests. I was thinking of either painting my room or reading a book."

"Are you ever going to show me this masterpiece of yours?"

"It's not finished," Luna started but then had a thought. "Then again, it may be a work in progress for some time so, tomorrow?"

"Looking forward to it."

Luna hoped this promise would encourage her Mum not to take too many risks.

"Little Clarice is working?" her father asked.



“She got her Healer Certificate at school,” Luna said as if it should be obvious that any hard working eight year old should be able to do likewise. Of course, Clarice was no more a true eight year old than Luna was a true nine year old, but parents tended to forget that, especially if their little girls still looked like little girls and not the young woman whose minds now occupied the smaller and not yet developing frames.

“And where does she work?” Xeno asked. He sensed a story. He knew it might not be one he could publish anytime soon, but one day...

Luna knew this as well. Her Daddy knew when not to publish something, which was what made him more respected by many than any Editor or reporter for the Daily Prophet. True, he made up stories, just as they did. But his were always written with humor and never about anyone real – although Luna was beginning to suspect this Fudge person with his Giant Toad might become an exception.

“London,” she said.

“Not St. Mungos!”

“No Daddy. There’s a special clinic she works at two or three days a week. It’s for witches and wizards who live and work in the Muggle world.”

“Really? And I take it the Ministry knows nothing about them?”

“Doubt it,” Luna said. “And before you ask, that’s about all I know as well.”

---

About fifty yards from the tall tower that was Luna’s home was another large building. To just about anyone, it looked like a barn. In reality it was a workshop. This was where Jasmine Lovegood worked on her spells. Although self taught as a Spell Crafter, she was one of the better ones in Britain at the time and occasionally came up with a



very useful spell she could then market – by way of books published by her husband's company. Luna had watched her mother do her experiments for almost as long as she could remember, although most of the time, Luna merely sat off to one side of the shop and read a book or drew pictures.

Her mother had said she had an inspiration recently for a new charm – a crossover as she called it. One of the dangers of potion making was that certain very useful potions were incredibly unstable at some critical point in the brewing process where one mistake would at best negate the entire work or at worst end very badly for the brewer and anyone or anything within twenty feet or more. Jasmine had announced when she started setting up the lab that morning that her Arithmancy calculations pointed to a spell that could potentially stabilize an otherwise unstable potion thus making such potions both safer to make and by extension more common and less expensive for the average witch or wizard to purchase. It would be a few hours before she could begin true experimentation as she had to first brew a potion to its point of momentary instability.

Luna paled when she learned this. To her horror, she knew this was a situation that fit the vague events Sensei had apparently described. However, she knew she could not know if this was the potion or the day. Part of her wanted to warn her mother, now more than ever. But she also knew that could backfire as well. Her mother might give up Spell Crafting altogether, which would certainly give Luna some peace of mind, but would also make the brilliant woman miserable. Jasmine was not the housewife type at all. The more likely option was that recognizing the potential danger, Jasmine would bar Luna from the lab which might well mean any chance of saving her would be lost. Luna decided it was better for her to wait. If this was the day, then her being here might increase the chance that the disaster that beset Sensei's Luna might not come to pass. Even if it was inevitable, Luna wanted to try to help and if help was not possible, to be there for her mother. No one should die alone it at all possible, she thought. It was not a comforting thought at all.

Her parent's chosen crafts had always inspired her. Her mother was the Spell Crafter. She invented spells, or at least tried to do so. Luna had gone off to Japan hoping one day to learn that craft as well and



was thrilled to learn that her school offered a Mastery – actually more than one – in Spell Crafting. Next summer, she would finish up her N.E.W.T. studies and enter the Mastery Levels. In addition to Defense, which she thought was both fun and, given the last War, important to learn, she was also considering Spell Crafting even though that was a twelve term course of study, the equivalent of six years.

Still, Japan had been somewhat distressing if only because it seemed to highlight how backwards Britain was compared to much of the magical world. Her mother worked on what were known as magic-on-magic enhancements. This meant new magic that made old magic either better or easier or both. Witches and Wizards had been doing this for centuries. The truth was the new discoveries in this field were fewer and farther between. Then again if you did make one, and her mother had made more than one, it could be quite lucrative. The problem was many of the ideas had already been tried and either failed, sometimes spectacularly, or were patented. There were some spell crafters out there who did not make money by selling their discoveries, rather by suing other spell crafters who later came up with the same idea and tried to sell it.

Luna learned the real open field was in something unofficially called Technomancy. This was adapting magic to work with or power muggle technologies or adapting muggle technologies to work with magic. Given the sheer scope of what Muggles were able to invent and the fact that no one had come up with a one magic fits all solution, the sky was full of possibilities. She learned that magic does not affect electricity at all, despite everything she had heard from her parents and others. Potter House was an example. It had electrical stuff and it worked despite the high levels of both ambient and active magics (ambient being in the wards and enchanted objects that radiate low levels of magic all the time – not to mention the weak magical fields any witch or wizard naturally generates, active being spell cast by magical or elves during their day to day activities.) Magic did, however, wreck havoc with electronics. All the really useful Muggle stuff used at least some electronics – even their cars. Enough magic, and the stuff did not work. So the cutting edge research was finding ways to shield electronics from magical interference or make a magical equivalent of the device or make a hybrid. Right now, Potter



House had a whole “magic proof” wing for their muggle devices: television, stereo, computers and all sorts of other electronic stuff. One day, that kind of solution might not be necessary. That sounded far more interesting to Luna than stabilizing a potion. Unfortunately, it was also technically illegal in Britain.

Her father was a journalist and published a bi-monthly alternative paper called The Quibbler. A lot of it he would admit was stuff submitted by faithful readers that probably did not have a grain of truth behind them, but they were always an amusing read. He tried to have one or two real stories in each issue about people or events of interest to the reading public and tried to do his best to report those stories as accurately and truthfully as possible. Most of his readers knew this and would always look to the Quibbler’s take on the events of the day as it would generally be closer to the truth than the Ministry propaganda that everyone knew polluted the national paper called the Daily Prophet.

Her father was also an amateur naturalist and spent several weeks each year in far off places looking for new magical creatures. Sometimes he even found them. Luna had heard in Japan that her father was considered one of the better explorers in the world at the moment, although her Magical Zoology professor did comment that her father, while good at finding new species, was not so good at describing them for science. Fortunately, whenever he found and reported upon a new species, the professional naturalists were there in days. Xenophilus Lovegood was credited with almost as many new and confirmed discoveries as the famous Newt Scamander who had died over sixty years ago. Luna was a little disappointed that her father was not the renowned scholar she had once seen him as, but proud none the less for his world reputation as an explorer and chronicler. She was taking Magical Zoology as one of her electives as well because she enjoyed it and in honor of her father. She was also surprised to learn that her school had a journalism degree at the college level, something she was considering for her future study, although that would not be until the summer after next at the earliest.

Luna was contemplating these things as she pretended to read her book while surreptitiously keeping an eye on her mother. She soon knew the potion her mother was making, one of many useful in



Healing and one she had learned herself in her O.W.L. level Potions class. This potion, she knew, became very unstable after about two hours and had to remain that way as an ingredient rendered down. If the next ingredient was added too soon, the result was quite violent. But, even if it was added at the right time, the brewer had to stir it in and for the next several minutes, it could explode. (The school had used self-stirring rods at this point in the process as those almost never over agitated the brew at this critical time.) Luna was certain that was when her mother would try the spell.

Again, she wondered whether she should warn her mother. And once again, she was torn. In addition to the obvious problems, warning her mother would mean explaining how she knew about a future event. This meant she could tell the truth, and that would mean revealing the existence of Sensei – an avatar of a wizard from the future sent back to radically change the past. However bleak the future might be, changing time was a serious matter and Luna knew it. She and the others believed the future being changed warranted the effort, but most witches and wizards would not see things that way. At the very least, she would be in serious trouble. At worst, her friends and her would be in serious trouble. The absolute worst would be their inability to prevent the end that would come if the future was not changed. With billions of lives at stake, Luna could not take that risk.

The other option was to lie. This posed two problems for the young girl. First off, she had never lied to her parents before. Secondly, what if they believed her? Her Dad might think her a Seer. That was too horrible to contemplate. Her Dad was into that sort of thing and would probably want her to do readings and all that rubbish. The problem was Luna knew she was not a Seer. They had been tested for that talent when they started school for only those children who showed evidence of the gift would be allowed to study Divination as an elective. Only three out of over four hundred students in Luna's years showed evidence of the talent and Luna was not one of them – much to her relief.

No, she thought, this is the best course because there is no reason to believe for certain that today is the day. Besides, Luna had a backup plan. She had her wand with her and was now twirling it absently in her right hand. The first thing she would have to do was keep her



mother as safe as possible then get help. She knew loads of spell with and without wands that might be useful in protecting her Mum, getting help was the issue that caused some concern.

The easiest way for any person living in a magical household was the floo call. One simply stuck their head in a magical fireplace, started the magical fire, called out the destination they wanted to talk to and they could do so. There were two problems with this. First of all, somebody had to be on the other side to get the call. She could only call from one fireplace to another. What if no one was home? What if no one was in the room? The other problem was there was no Floo in the workshop. She would have to run back to the house just to use that method. By then, it might be too late for her Mum.

The patronus charms was her best option and she knew it. She had learned the defense charm in Fourth Session (Year). In her O.W.L. Session she had learned the Communication Variant. The Defense Variant was the harder to learn, but had to be learned first. The Communications Variant was probably the more useful. A patronus was a magical projection of positive energy that, when properly case, took on the form of an animal. In the Defense Variant, it could drive off a manner of nasty dark creatures with ease. The Communications Variant could almost instantaneously communicate with another person or persons over vast difference. It was not a two way communications channel. She could send a simple message. But for this potential situation, that was enough. Her patronus would find Harry, Hermione, Clarice and Neville wherever they were even if they were separated from each other by hundreds of miles or more.

Still, it was not an easy spell to cast when under stress. Luna knew this as while she was the first in her class to cast either spell successfully, when she was faced with a dementor under controlled conditions, it took her four tries to cast the spell. You needed some happy thought to get the spell to work right and she was sure that might be a problem if she was watching her mother die.

Fortunately, she had learned a way around that problem in her Charms Class. Her professor had taught them a spell called Priori Incantatum, which could be used to determine what spells a wand had cast. What it did was force the wand to reveal ghost like images



of the spells it had cast in reverse order of casting. A powerful enough witch could determine every spell a wand had ever case. However, the reason they were taught that spell was to learn a more advanced variant. Apparently, wands could store a finite number of full power spells. This had all sorts of applications. In Combat Defense, for example, one could load their wand with five or six offensive curses before going into a fight and with a slight wand movement fire a barrage of spells at opponents in the opening second. However, almost any wand spell could be “front loaded” into a wand and as soon as Luna was told about Sensei’s Luna, she had front loaded her wand with the Communications Patronus. It would take but a fraction of a second to send out her call for help and she would then be free to use her magic, either wand, wandless or both, to help her Mum until help arrived. She just hoped it would work.

Luna noted the small puff of green smoke rise from her mother’s potion. She knew this meant her mother had just added the active ingredient and the potion was now at its most volatile stage. She gripped her wand and watched. Would her mother try the spell now? Or would she try it later. Just how much potion was in that caldron? She knew that it was best to brew that potion in small batches even with full precautions, but that was a large caldron her Mum was using. If it was two thirds full – the recommended fill for most effective brewing, which was why caldrons came in so many sizes – that was a bomb her Mum was playing with.

She held her breath as her Mum raised her wand. Was this it? It was the last thought Luna had. She saw the flash long before she heard it it seemed and at that moment flicked her wrist. Whatever she saw the second flash of white telling her that the message was on its way just as the blast wave hit her full on. She had been seated in a chair, but the blast had knocked her over and she was certain she was deafened. It took a second for her to regain her wits and another second to realize that aside from a loud ringing in her ears, she was otherwise unharmed. Either that or she was in shock. Oddly she remembered that bit from her magical first aide classes.

She looked back at the scene of the disaster. The potions stations was now an inferno and the flames were spreading rapidly, but her Mum was not there. She panicked for a moment, then saw her Mum



lying against the opposite wall of the lab. Her Mum was clearly bleeding – a good sign as dead people don't bleed she had been told – and probably unconscious. That was not good. Even worse, there was a large wooden beam directly over her mother that seemed to have been knocked loose and was starting to move. With her wand, she cast a levitation spell to keep the beam from falling. She dared not try and move her Mum as she was. She had no idea how injured the woman was and without a petrification spell, movement might kill the woman. She thought about using a wandless levitation charm on the beam so she could use her wand to tend to her Mum and get her out, but the fire was spreading too rapidly. She ran over to her Mum, keeping the beam from falling and then casting a wandless shield around them and pushing it out keep the fire at bay and allow help to enter the shop. Already, she was starting to feel weak and was wondering how long she could keep this up. She hoped help would arrive soon.

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 13th, 1989 – POTTER HOUSE, LONDON, U.K.

Six people were sitting in the back parlor of Potter House. Sirius was there with his soon to be wife visiting with his Grandfather Lord Black and Harry and Hermione. Clarice had only just returned from her work at the Healing Clinic. A silvery rabbit popped into the room surprising all. The children immediately recognized it. A scared voice of a young girl was then heard. "HELP!"

Clarice jumped up as Harry and Hermione looked at each other and paled slightly.

"I'll get my kit," Clarice said and she immediately vanished.

"Stave?" Harry asked Hermione.

"Shrunken and in its holster, you?"

Harry nodded. "Wands?"

Hermione nodded.



“Let’s go!”

The two children also vanished from the room.

“What just happened?” Lord Black asked.

Just then Clarice reappeared with what looked like a large backpack on her back and a wand drawn.

“What’s going on?” Sirius asked.

“Luna’s Mum is in trouble,” Clarice said. “That was the call.”

“Bugger!”

“Sophie?” Clarice asked. Sophie looked at her in confusion. “Who’s the on-call in Casualty at St. Mungo’s right now?”

Sophie blinked. “What?”

“Do you know who the on-call in Casualty is?”

“Er – I think it’s Healer Tonks, why?”

“I thought he was Pediatrics.”

“We all have to do a turn in Casualty. Why?”

“Can you go there and tell them we have a casualty coming in? Probably in serious to critical condition. Get the hypochondriacs out and get ready for a critical patient - full surgical suite.”

“How do you know...”

“Please. Not much time. We’ll be busting down the doors there in ten minutes, twenty at the most. If we’re not there in half an hour, alert the morgue.” Before Sophie could respond, Clarice vanished again.

“Sirius?” Sophie asked in confusion.



"I don't think this is a joke, Sophie," Sirius replied in a very serious tone.

Sophie nodded. She walked over to the huge fireplace, took some dust in her hand and stepped in. She called out "St. Mungo's!", dropped the dust to the ground and vanished in a flash of green flames.

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 13th, 1989 – THE ROOKERY, OTTERY ST. CATCHPOLE, DEVON, U.K.

Harry and Hermione both shifted to almost the same spot, a path just before a gate in the white picket fence that led to the front door of the tall tower what was Luna's home. They had both been there many times before and this was always where they had arrived. They did have to look for Luna the first time as she was off in the woods, but this was their arrival point.

"It looks okay," Hermione said. She was right. Nothing seemed out of place or damaged or anything. "False alarm?"

"It's Luna, Hermione," Harry said.

Hermione nodded. Luna was too honest to do something like that. "Is there a basement or something?"

"Never got past the lowest two floors," Harry said. "Don't know."

"Must be one," Hermione said. She watched as Harry stepped to the gate.

"Let's check it out," he said.

"Guys!" voice called from behind them, "it's over there!"

The two turned and saw about fifty feet away their friend Neville pointing off to the right. They ran up to him, or they would have except he took off to the right of the tower. They followed and soon saw what Neville was on about. A large barn was partly afire and what was not burning was billowing smoke.



“Bugger me!” Harry said half expecting Hermione to chide him for his language.

“Got that right,” she said to his surprise.

“Neville?” Harry asked his friend.

“Got Luna’s patronus,” he replied. “Where’s Clarice?”

“Coming,” another voice said and the three turned and saw Clarice running to them with her large pack on her back. “They’re in there, aren’t they?” she said when she arrived looking at the burning barn.

The others nodded.

Clarice dropped her pack and took out a smaller bag. “This is the Casualty Control Point,” she said. “And Rally Point if anything goes wrong.”

“Agreed,” Harry said. “Right then, we have a fire and at least one injured. Bubble Head Charms for air, we enter with shields up and Flame Freezing Charms in place. Locator Charms for us and just in case Luna and her Mum are separated. Rally back here!”

“I deal with the injured,” Clarice added. “Get me before you move them!”

The others nodded in agreement.

“Let’s go!” Harry said.

---

There was not much more than Luna could do and she knew it. The shield she had cast was holding and keeping the fire contained to the other half of the barn and with her wand she was keeping the massive wooden beam from falling on her unconscious mother. While they were safe for the moment, Luna did not know how long she could keep this up. She knew far more magic than most children her age,



but magically she was still eight years old and every second of maintaining the spells was draining. Worse, while the flames were kept at bay, the heat was not and she had never felt such heat before in her life. She hoped her friends had received her message, for if they had not, in a couple of minutes she knew it would all be over for both her and her Mum.

‘At least I tried,’ she thought. ‘At least I could try, and if the end comes, we’ll still be together.’ It was her last conscious thought as the darkness took her.

---

Harry and the others entered the barn with Harry in the lead. The first thing they all saw was the raging inferno. The next was Luna standing near her mother who were it not for the blood otherwise would have looked like she was seated against the wall taking a kip. Luna had her arms raised, her empty left hand looked as if she was trying to hold back the flames while her wand was pointed at a beam that was directly over her mother. The poor girl was trembling, a sure sign that she was approaching magical exhaustion.

“Neville? You got your staff?” Harry asked.

“Sure do,” Neville said. “Want me to keep that beam up?”

Harry nodded. “I’ll hold back the fire.”

“I’ll help Clarice then,” Hermione said.

Neville and Harry drew their staves and wands. With the staves held in their left hand and in contact with the ground, each cast their spells just moments before Luna collapsed. The two boys watched as Hermione and Clarice said something to each other and Hermione went over to Luna. She checked the fallen girl over for only a second before gathering the girl’s wand and casting a spell that made Luna float in the air. As the boys concentrated on their spells and Clarice checked over Luna’s mother, Hermione levitated the girl out of the barn.



Hermione seemed to be gone for a while, but in reality it was only a couple of minutes before she was back and beside Clarice and her patient. Harry and Neville were both grateful for the staves as magically they both knew they could keep their spells going indefinitely. The heat, however, was another matter altogether. Physical heat exhaustion was a condition that affected Muggle and Magical alike and the boys knew it, each hoping Clarice would hurry and get the woman to safety.

"Don't move her," they heard Clarice say to Hermione. "She's impaled on something in back. A nail or spike or something. Move her now and it would probably make things worse."

"What should I do?" Hermione asked. "We can't leave her here."

"Use a severing charm between her back and the wall, carefully," Clarice said.

"You want to leave that spike in her?" Hermione asked.

"Safest thing," Clarice said. "Remove it and no telling what will happen. If it damaged a major artery, she could bleed to death before we could begin to treat her."

Hermione nodded with understanding as she carefully aimed her wand behind the unconscious woman. A second or so later, Hermione leaned back. "Okay, she's free."

Clarice cast a petrification charm on the woman explained it was the safest way to move a person with unknown injuries. The woman was soon levitated into the air and Clarice began to move her from the barn.

"How will you two get out?" Hermione asked with real concern in her voice.

"Shift," Neville suggested.

"Good idea, Nev," Harry said. "Once you all are clear, Hermione, send us a patronus and we'll shift out of here."



Hermione nodded and followed Clarice from the barn.

A few minutes later a silver otter appeared in front of the two boys. "We're clear," Hermione's voice said.

Harry and Neville looked at each other and nodded. The two vanished from the barn Neville a split second before Harry. They reappeared a few feet away from the others, although neither looked at the girls for the scene of the barn practically exploding in flames and collapsing upon itself held everyone's attention except Clarice who was busy with Jasmine.

After a few seconds, Harry turned to the rally point and saw two gurneys. On one was Luna, who appeared unconscious and on the other was her mother whom Clarice was checking.

"Well," Harry asked, "how are they and where did these gurney things come from?"

"They are part of my kit," Clarice said. "They're shrunk down in the pack. Just had to enlarge them. Luna's out cold, suffering from magical exhaustion for certain and maybe heat exhaustion as well. She'll probably have to stay in hospital overnight. Mrs. Lovegood is in bad shape. I have her in stasis for now..."

"Stasis?"

"For her, time is standing still. Several of her injuries are potentially life threatening. The one in her back is really serious. Were she to move through time at normal speed, she might bleed to death before we can stabilize her conditions."

"What are with the bags?" Neville asked. He saw there were clear bags hanging beside the two Lovegoods with tubes that seemed attached to their arms. Harry knew from his own hospital stay that they were IV bags of some kind. Luna had two and Jasmine three.

"Intravenous potions," Clarice said. "Luna has one to replenish her fluids and another to help with her magical exhaustion and Mrs.



Lovegood has a pain killer, a blood replenishing potion and a variant of the Draught of the Living Dead. Of course, while she's in stasis, they won't do much. But we will have to bring her out of it soon to treat some of her injuries."

The others nodded. Clarice was the Healer so they left it at that.

Harry nodded. "Now what?"

"The Gurneys are portkeys," Clarice said. "The patients are restrained for transport. We portkey them to St. Mungo's. Sophie should have gone ahead and Casualty is waiting to receive them. All we have to do is hang on and activate the portkeys."

"Right," Hermione said. "Let's grab hold then. Two to a gurney."

Harry and Clarice grabbed hold of Jasmine's gurney while Hermione and Neville grabbed on to Luna's."

"Activate," Hermione and Clarice said in unison.

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 13th, 1989 – ST. MUNGO'S, LONDON, U.K.

The Welcome Witch at St. Mungo's had seen a lot of things over the years, but never this. Four young children had porkeyed into the reception area along with two wheeled beds of a type she had never seen before. Upon the beds were a woman who looked severely injured and a young girl who appeared unconscious. Before she could say anything, the four children began pushing the two beds down the hallway at a near run. Well, one could not have that! This was a hospital, not a playground!

"You lot!," she cried out. "Come back here this instant!"

The children did not even slow down.

The Welcome Witch drew her wand and aimed it at the back of one of the boys. "Stupefy!" she called out and a red jet of light shot at the retreating boy with sandy hair, only to seemingly bounce back right at



her. She barely had time to avoid her own spell by diving to the floor. By the time she got up, the children had disappeared somewhere.

Neville smirked. He had cast a silent and wandless shield charm expecting such a reaction and smiled to himself that it had both been necessary and it had worked. He and Hermione followed Clarice and Harry around a corner and through a large set of doors beneath a sign that said "Casualty." Waiting for them inside, it seemed, were two witches and a wizard. He recognized one as Sophie Tompkins who would marry Sirius Black the day after tomorrow. The other two he did not know.

"Right," the wizard said, "what's this?"

"Critical patient is the adult," Clarice said with a professional tone in her voice. "Her name is Jasmine Lovegood. Don't know her age. Multiple injuries, several are or may be life threatening. She's under a stasis field."

"The Ministry frowns on those," the Wizard said.

"Yet without one she'd be in the morgue," Clarice replied. "As far as I'm concerned those idiots can sod off!"

No one corrected the girl for her language, although Hermione was tempted.

"The other is her daughter, Luna, age nine," Clarice continued. "Serious but stable. Suffering from magical exhaustion and probably heat exhaustion. No apparent signs of other injuries, but she should be checked out."

"And you are, young lady?" the wizard asked.

"Healer Clarice Jameson," she replied. "Basic Cert from Watanabe Healer College in Japan. I have my cert if you need it. Any you are?"

"Ted Tonks," the wizard replied. "I'm Dora's dad. It's a pleasure to meet you. I know Harry here and Dora said Luna was on her floor in



Japan. We were supposed to meet at Lord Black's wedding, but there you go. The others?"

"Hermione Granger and Neville Longbottom," Clarice replied.

"Ah yes, Dora's speaks highly of them as well. Aside from you, any other Healers?"

"No Sir."

"Sophie said there would be casualties so I hope you don't mind if I brought help?"

"No Sir," Clarice replied. She knew the other witch. "Sharon, nice to see you again."

"You to Cousin," the witch replied. "You're really a Healer?"

Clarice nodded. "Just got off shift when this went down. Neville," she turned to the one person who most certainly did not know the young witch, "this is Sharon Evans. She is the oldest of the Evans family." She turned to Sharon. "Neville was at school in Japan with Jason and Amber."

"Oh! You're that Neville," Sharon said. "They speak highly of you, you know."

"Thank you, Ma'am," Neville said with a blush. "I think highly of them too."

"Sharon's just fine, Neville," Sharon said. "Unless you call Jason and Amber Sir and Ma'am."

Neville blushed and shook his head indicating he did not.

"Right," Clarice said, "we have work to do."

"There's a waiting room across the hall," Ted Tonks added.



The other three children nodded. "We need to leave for a bit anyway," Harry said. "Need to let Mr. Lovegood know."

"Probably should let the folks back home know as well," Hermione added. With that, the three children left.

"Okay, so what do we have?" Ted Tonks asked.

"Jasmine Lovegood is a Spell Crafter," Clarice said. "She has a workshop near their home. There was an explosion and fire. When we arrived at the scene responding to a call for help from our friend Luna - her daughter - the shop was ablaze. Luna was using magic to keep the flames away from her mother and to keep the roof from collapsing upon them. Harry and Neville took over just before Luna collapsed from magical exhaustion.

"As for Luna, she may also be suffering from hear exhaustion and while I found no signs of other injuries, I was more occupied with her mother so Luna needs a full work up. Assuming no other problems, she should probably spend the night here and can be released in the morning."

The other Healers nodded.

"Her Mum is in bad shape. My guess is she took the brunt of the explosion. Burns to her face, neck and arms. She suffered a concussive trauma to her front torso to include multiple lacerations and several penetrating wounds. There are pewter fragments in her chest and abdomen not inconsistent with the remains of a potions cauldron, therefore wound contamination must be considered. Both arms are broken and she has a dislocated left shoulder, again consistent with blast effects. She has a few broken ribs as well, although I found no indication of organ damage associated with that trauma. She was thrown against a wall. No evidence of cervical or lumbar spine injury, but strain cannot be ruled out. Probably has a concussion, which would explain the fact that she was unconscious when we arrived. What concerns me is her back. She was thrown against a wall and impaled upon a large nail or spike. The object was severed from the wall and is still there but its location is of concern. It may have damaged the Superior Mesenteric artery."



"Hence the Stasis Field," Ted Tonks said.

Clarice nodded. "If that is damaged and we remove the object..."

"She'd bleed out in seconds," Ted agreed. "Right then. Sophie? Give Luna here a thorough going over and release her to recovery, if there's nothing else to deal with. Then assist the rest of us with her mother."

"Yes sir," Sophie said.

"Clarice?" Ted Tonks said. "You have lead."

---

The waiting room across the hall soon filled. Harry had found Luna's father at the Quibbler offices and had brought him to the hospital. They were soon joined by Hermione and Lord Black. Sirius stayed behind for the Grangers and arrived a few hours later. Neville and his Gran were there as well, and all were offering what they could in support of Luna's Dad who was understandably devastated, even more so as the hours passed.

Several hours had passed since the casualties had entered the hospital and the vigil was one of foreboding. Everyone was tense. Mr. Lovegood was on the verge of mental and emotional collapse when the door to the waiting room opened and four Healers entered led by the youngest: Clarice.

She walked up to Mr. Lovegood with the other three behind her.

"Mr. Lovegood?" she asked.

His red and puffy eyed face looked up - barely - at the young girl.

"I am Clarice, Luna's friend."

"H-how is she?" Mr. Lovegood asked.



"Fine. She's resting. She really was amazing today."

"H-How so?"

"She saved your wife's life."

"So Jasmine?"

"She's going to live, Mr. Lovegood."

"Oh thank Merlin!" he replied. "Can I see her? Can I see them?"

Clarice nodded. "They're in the same room for now. Luna should be released in the morning. Your wife may be here for a few weeks, but I expect a full recovery."

"How can you..." he began, clearly wondering why this girl was telling him about his wife.

"Healer Jameson was the lead Healer," Ted Tonks said. "Quite an amazing one at that."

"Y-you were not?"

"Healer Jameson was on scene at the accident sight," Ted said. "She was there and, well, but for her and your daughter, we'd be talking about funeral arrangements."

"And you and the others?"

"Ms. Jameson trained at a top notch Healer College. She's learned stuff we don't know here and some of her skills are why your wife is still with us."

Mr. Lovegood looked at the girl in scrubs before him. "Thank you."

"There's more," Clarice said.

"I'm not sure I can handle more." Mr. Lovegood said.



“Can you handle babies?” Clarice asked.

“What?” several voices asked.

“Your wife is expecting,” Clarice said. “Twins to be exact, a boy and a girl. She and they should be fine.”

Xeno Lovegood passed out.

Clarice looked at the Grangers. “You don’t mind if I sleep ‘til noon tomorrow? I’m totally knackered! What with a C-Section in the morning and now this...”



## CHAPTER FORTY-SIX: UNEXPECTED CONSEQUENCES

MONDAY, OCTOBER 25th, 1989 – QUIBBLER PUBLISHING COMPANY, DIAGON ALLEY, LONDON, U.K.

The Quibbler fell into its own unique niche in the publishing world of magical Britain. There were daily newspapers like the Daily Prophet that purported to report of the news and events of the day. The truth was that those papers in general and the Prophet in particular were less like the London Times and more like the Guardian, focused on sensationalism, but with even less concern for the truth. Added to that was the fact that the Daily Prophet, which enjoyed by far the largest circulation in wizarding Britain, was also in the pocket of the Ministry of Magic and one might argue it was as reliable as Pravda in the Soviet Union in presenting the unvarnished truth.

The Quibbler was more like a magazine, and in that regards it was unique. True, it printed its fair share of outlandish stuff, but the true and loyal readers knew when the Quibbler was being serious and when it was being fanciful or farcical. It combined “news” with travel guides and the closest thing in wizarding publishing to a nature section. As it really had no specific focus, it was a unique periodical. The others were dedicated to narrow topics such as Quidditch Weekly (obiously all things Quidditch), Teen Witch Weekly (obviously anything a teen aged witch might find of interest – read fashions, fads and wizard heartthrobs), and the various professional journals such as Transfiguration Today.

Every so often, the Quibbler would print real news and its owner and Editor in Chief was proud of those stories when he printed them. While Xenophilius Lovegood was more than willing to print what his loyal subscribers wanted to read, it was his magazine and he enjoyed when he had the scoop on the Dailies and took pride in the integrity of his more news or investigative pieces. It did not hurt that whenever he went head-to-head with the Daily Prophet on a story or scooped them, his circulation more than quadrupled for those issues. Not bad for what he considered as a hobby.

He had missed out on the Harry Potter story last year – at least the one that everyone now remembered. The Boy-Who-Was-Abused



broke when he was on safari. But he had returned to cover the trials of Sirius Black and the Minister for Magic's housecleaning of the Ministry. While he had praised the Minister for her actions, his editorials questioned why it had taken so long and he had excoriated the government for its handling of the Lucius Malfoy case. He was furious – as were many of his readers – that the Inner Circle Death Eater had gotten off with a sentence that made him eligible for release in late 1991 all for fingering inactive Death Eaters within the Ministry. After all, they were marked, weren't they?

Last Monday, the Daily Prophet had written a scandalous series of articles about the wedding of Sirius Black. Personally, Xeno was pleased that Sirius and his bride were well out of the country when that paper published and would be for some time. Sirius might well have become a murderer had he read the less than subtle insults thrown at him and more infuriating, at his new wife.

The Prophet claimed that none other than Lord Black himself had disowned his Heir Apparent for marrying a Muggle Born witch and that the other Ancient and Noble Houses supported the move. Funny thing, Xeno thought as he watched his presses running at full speed, the only reporter who was actually at the wedding was Xeno Lovegood, who also happened to be the Head of one of the twelve Ancient and Noble Houses and he most certainly would not have endorsed such an action had it occurred. He also knew the truth. Lord Black was not only at the wedding, but had blessed the union in no uncertain terms while toasting the couple at the reception and made clear his intent to disown every suspected Pureblood Elitist in his Clan urging the other Ancient and Noble Houses to do the same, assuming they had any such bigots in their ranks.

If one believed the Prophet, the Twelve Ancient and Noble Houses were all longstanding Pureblood families and none of them showed up for the wedding. The truth was something altogether different. Not one of them could claim to be pureblood back more than eight generations, and the only one that could claim that were the Blacks. Only half could even claim to be Purebloods by the narrowest of definitions: the Blacks, Diggorys, Longbottoms, Lovegoods, Prewetts and Weasleys. The rest were Half Bloods.



More critically, ten of the twelve houses were at the wedding. Only the Diggorys and Mercers were not there and that was because their children were away at school and the Head of Clans usually spent the autumn overseas. They had sent gifts. It was the largest gathering of the Ancient and Noble Houses in over a century and the first wedding of an Heir Apparent in over a decade and the Quibbler was there.

The Quibbler had a full front page dedicated to the wedding and focusing on the unique gathering. It made a point that two of the Houses would likely cease to exist in a generation. Ignatius Prewett and his wife were old and had no children and the rest of the wizards in his Clan died in War. The Bones Clan was down to two witches, Amelia who was Head of the Department of Magical Law Enforcement, and her niece Susan. Xeno smiled thinking that if the wedding had been much earlier, he would have had to include his own Clan, as he was the only wizard left. Obviously, with a son and daughter due in the spring, that was about to change.

The decimation of the Clans in the last War led to another lengthy article that was highly critical of magical society in general and about its handling of the war orphans in particular. This piece, published with the permission on their families and the orphans themselves, told the story of Luna's five best friends, all of whom were orphaned in the war. Four were from Ancient and Noble Houses, in three cases more than one. The fifth was from a venerable line dating back to the founders if not beyond. All were orphaned during the war. Only two had any magical family left. The other three children were sent to live in the Muggle world. The Quibbler did not identify any of the children by name. Aside from that, it was an expose in the secrecy of the Ministry and the callous disregard society seemed to have for orphaned magical children. As orphans without any surviving magical family who could care for them, the Ministry kept their names and lineages secret.

According to an interview with a "Ministry Official," this policy was to prevent a child from being adopted solely for their possible inheritances. The sad result was they had no magical heritage and would not be adopted by magical families concerned about such things, which included a substantial number as Muggle Borns were not allowed to adopt children of superior lineage. There was no



orphanage for magical children. The policy was that they were placed in Muggle homes. Worse, once placed they were considered Muggle Borns by the Ministry and therefore by society at large. The article wondered how many lines died out this way.

This expose found an even larger scandal, one which would definitely set the wizarding world on its ear, and one which Xeno reported in detail, but buried towards the end of the issue. It was not just magical orphans who were adopted out into the Muggle World. According to additional sources, for close to two centuries there had been and still was a major problem of teen pregnancy in the schools – particularly at the flagship school Hogwarts. In a typical year, Hogwarts produced at least as many babies as it did N.E.W.T. recipients, usually more. The vast majority wound up adopted into Muggle homes. If a school girl became pregnant, she faced expulsion or she could have the child and lose it to adoption. They were sent to a special ward that would allow them to carry to term in a matter of days. Once the child was born, the mother and father were obliterated and would have no memory of the child or the pregnancy.

The lowest rate of teen pregnancy was among those raised in the Muggle world. Oddly, the Purebloods were the worst. The culture was about heirs and while not forbidden, precautions were never discussed or taught, at least until an heir was born. Over 70% of the young Pureblood girls had at least one child before finishing school. Some had far more than one. All the children, like the orphans, wound up in Muggle homes and returned to the magical world as “Muggle Born.” An “official” estimated that at least a third of the Muggle Borns actually were of magical descent.

The initial source for this story was Minerva McGonagall, although she was never mentioned in the article. As Deputy Headmistress, the pregnancy problems had been delegated to her to handle, although she was forbidden to “educate” her young charges to avoid the problem in the first place. She told Xeno that Hogwarts was the worst most likely because it was the only boarding school and teenagers could get together quite easily at night given the relative lack of supervision. But the records that supported her story were available at the Ministry Hall of Records and, as the workers there were generally a disgruntled lot and the records were not “secret,” it was



easy for Xeno to write the story as if all he had done was peruse the records.

Minerva had given him some deep background that Xeno knew he could not publish – yet, if ever. He knew he and Jasmine had not had any children at Hogwarts. They had been best friends and exclusive boyfriend/girlfriend practically from their first day at school, but had not become lovers until their wedding night. Obviously, they were more the exception than the rule. The two Ancient and Noble Houses that were supposedly on the verge of dying out might not be however. Both a Bones Heir Apparent and a Prewett Heir Apparent had fathered sons while at Hogwarts who might still be alive or at least have a living descendant. Of course, until this could be confirmed – if it could be – it was not worth publication. Neither was a list of now supposed society denizens and Pureblood princesses who had been baby factories while in school. Then again, Xeno doubted any of Bellatrix LeStranges five children or their five fathers would want to know the truth.

Xeno knew that story would raise a small firestorm once it hit the stands, which was a perfect way to hide another story in plain sight. This issue also told the story of the four children who saved his wife's life. In this case, he definitely withheld facts. Luna had used accidental magic to protect her fallen mother. Her friends just happened to be stopping by and went to their aide dragging Luna and her Mum from the barn. They used emergency portkeys that Jasmine had in the house to get to St. Mungo's. (Jasmine did indeed have such portkeys.) Clarice was only identified as Harry's younger sister, not by name. Healer Jameson was a foreign trained witch (true) who was cursed as a child so that she never physically grew up. Of course there was no mention whatsoever of the Watanabe School and only those children and families affiliated with the Weekend Warriors would be able to figure out the truth. Xeno finished this last article by telling that his wife was pregnant with twins and that she was doing well, although she was still in the hospital.

---

The one story he wanted to write but knew he could not was about the education his daughter was receiving. He knew it was an



interesting story, but also knew that right now the Ministry and the Pureblood Elites would raise hell to learn British magical children were all but pouring out of the country to receive an education that their government refused to provide. The story began with a couple of Muggles (the Grangers) who were caring for three young magical children. One was their adopted daughter and the other two were magical orphans who the Muggles had placed with them. These two Muggles had learned a little of the state of magical education in Britain and decided to send the children somewhere that would provide the best education they could find. That somewhere was Japan of all places.

Those three children, then aged six through eight, left Britain for a summer in Japan and returned with their I.C.W. O.W.L.'s. Of course, Xeno would then have to explain how time magic is not such a big deal over there. When the children returned, they started showing their young friends what they had learned. There were about thirty children who came to learn from the three who had been to Japan during the next year, many of whom were already attending either Hogwarts or St. George's School of Magic in London. The next summer, ten more children left for Japan. Four came back with O.W.L.s, including Luna, and the older six with their N.E.W.T.s. The original three returned with N.E.W.T.s, a Mastery each and their non-magical Secondary Education Diplomas. All would return for more education, more Masteries and even non-magical university degrees.

But the story, as Xeno saw, it did not end there. There were other children, parents and even select educators who saw both the need for and the opportunities for an education far beyond what was available anywhere in magical Britain. When the children returned from Japan, "The Club" reconvened and more than doubled in size, raising some questions about how to pay for all those children. There was a Foundation that had stepped in (Xeno would decide later whether to include the fact that it was the Potter Foundation), but it was barely enough.

It stepped the government. Not the Magical one, but the Muggle one who seemed to care more about the education of magical children in Britain than the Ministry of Magic did. They also wanted the opportunity available to all magical children, not just those at



Hogwarts and St. George's. There was a meeting with the head of the Foundation (one Harry Potter), some key members of the Club, adults who had seen the school in Japan and select educators from all six magical schools in Britain. The Muggle Government would pay to send magical children to Japan for their comprehensive education, at 25,000 Galleons per student per summer. Seventy-seven children preparing for Japan or helping the others prepare became over 250 – at first.

A few days after the Wedding which was the bulk of his next issue, Xeno was invited to attend another meeting of the Board, as it was now called. Interest had grown. To Xeno's surprise, the non-magical government representatives did not bat an eye when told of the proposed new numbers. In a few weeks, the Club would grow to over seven hundred members, larger than any magical school in Britain. Around 450 would be heading off to Japan next summer. The projected numbers would increase each of the next three years reaching a peak in the summer of 1993 of around 1300 students. The British non-magical government was even going to pay for the construction of new dormitory facilities at the school in Japan to handle the increased student population as well as help pay the salaries for additional professors and such. By the summer of 1994, the estimate was that at least one third of all the students in Britain would be receiving their educations in Japan, along with more than a few of their younger siblings age seven and up.

Xeno knew that education was the path to knowledge and knowledge was the one thing the "powers that be" did not want the people to have. The system that ran magical Britain could only work if the majority of the witches and wizards believed what they were told by their supposed leaders and lacked either the will or ability to learn the truth for themselves. As Editor of the Quibbler, Xeno had been seeking the truth and publishing it as often as he could without tweaking those in power so much that they would feel obliged to do something about either the problem Xeno was writing about or Xeno himself. If, however, there was a new class of young, idealistic and highly educated magicals running about, the "powers that be" might find their monopoly on information, knowledge, belief and ultimately power untenable. Xeno knew the seeds of revolution when he saw them. Unlike a fair few of his countrymen, he had studied non-



magical history and knew that oppressive regimes could not long survive and educated and energized populace. Especially a populace that was better armed than their oppressors, which was just the populace that would matriculate from that school in Japan.

The only question in Xeno's mind was when would this lion emerge from its den? He knew now was not the time. But he suspected that it might not be necessary to wait until 1994. Perhaps as early as 1992 or even 1991, the tide of this new history would reach a critical momentum that the Ministry could not stop and hope to survive. What Xeno did know was that the Quibbler had a front row seat to chat could be the most significant series of events in Magical Britain in centuries. He knew the Ministry would do its usual job of slander and threats, but the Quibbler would be there armed with the truth. Magical Britain as he had known it was already dead, it just didn't know it yet.

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 27th, 1989, HOGWARTS SCHOOL OF WITCHCRAFT AND WIZARDRY, SCOTLAND, U.K.

There was a saying that curiosity killed the cat, Albus Dumbledore thought, or at least in this case one Orville Slander. If there was ever a more apt name for a loathsome man, the name of the very recently deceased Editor of the Daily Prophet was one. Under his lengthy tenure, if that corpulent man had ever allowed the unvarnished truth to be published, Albus was unaware of it. The pathological liar had usually gotten away with his delusional view of the world, or at least the view dictated to him by either the Ministry of Magic or the highest bidder. Albus was not beneath paying that odious man to publish something that he believed forwarded the Greater Good, but it did not follow that Albus had any respect for the recently departed and he could not help but chuckle at the circumstances of the fat man's demise.

Apparently, he had received one Howler too many in the less than two days since the Quibbler hit the street. It seems his readers were less than pleased that his paper and the Quibbler disagreed on all points about what should have been the wedding of the decade. The howler than precipitated the dead man's massive heart attack was his largest advertising account announcing both that it was no longer going to pay his outrageous fees, but was considering demanding a



substantial refund. This was moments after the dead man had spoken to the reporter who had written about the wedding, only to learn that the woman was on holiday in France that day and had made the story up while doing tequila shots. She had never even met any of the people she allegedly quoted, but less talked to them. Ordinarily, Slander would not have cared, but the mistakes and falsehoods had been spelled out in detail in the Quibbler, a paper he came to learn that people actually read from time to time, and his paymasters were now openly questioning whether his paper had ever published an accurate story.

Needless to say, one Albus Dumbledore was also curious. In his case he was curious to know what all this hubbub was about. He had read the now infamous article in the Prophet and at the time suspected it was rubbish. He also was all but certain it would be the “truth” as far as most of Magical Britain was concerned. That the odd Quibbler would expose the Prophet for the fraud that it was and indirectly rid the magical publishing world of its greatest leach demanded another read. Albus headed out to Hogsmeade Village to see if he could buy a copy of the eccentric magazine.

A couple of hours later he was back at his desk with the now infamous issue of the Quibbler in his hands. The first article, which took the entire first five pages, mainly because of all the photographs, was the one in question. Clearly, the Prophet’s version of events and Quibbler’s were so unrelated in any details, aside from the name of the Groom, that one had to be wholly fake. (Albus remembered the only photo in the Prophet was an old one of Sirius Black taken just after he was processed at Azkaban.)

The article was followed by at least three pages of letters from guests at the wedding pointing out every falsehood published in the Prophet and inviting readers to write for further confirmation. How the Prophet could mistake the name of the Bride when the couple had sent their wedding announcement was beyond reasoning. Her name was Sophia Anne Tompkins, not Anna Saphire. The vitriol of those letters almost paled with the wrath in the Editor’s letter that followed that was a blatant assault on the integrity and motives of the Prophet and any who worked there, suggesting even the custodial staff was not above suspicion.



The next article was a detailed expose of the fate of magical orphans. This disturbed the Headmaster, for it once again brought up the story of one Harry Potter. Dumbledore was still “recovering” from the damage the Boy-Who-Was-Abused scandal had done to his reputation. He had, after all, been the one that “placed” the lad with Muggle relatives who had all but killed the boy. He knew there was more to this than he could recall and had been trying to remember or find out what for over a year to no avail. Still, there was something else about that boy, something important that might explain why Albus had done what he had done. He did not buy his “they were his relatives” excuse any more than anyone else had. But, as annoying as a gaping hole in his memory was, he shrugged it off. At almost one hundred and fifty years of age one could not be expected to remember trivial details and it was not as if that Potter kid was the only orphan he had “placed” back during the war or at other times. It struck him as unreasonable to be expected to check up on the scores or more whom he had found homes for over the years given his other more important duties. That excuse had not earned him any sympathy either, but he did feel that was the truth.

Towards the end of the paper – at least the end of the non-fanciful portion of it (far be it for Lovegood not to publish about recent Snorkack sightings and such) – there was an article that almost caused the venerable Headmaster to suffer a similar fate as that of the late Editor of the Daily Prophet. He immediately called his Deputy Headmistress into his office.

“You sent for me, Albus?” Minerva McGonagall asked several minutes later.

“Have you read this?” Albus asked holding up The Quibbler and doing his best to keep his anger in check.

Minerva nodded. She was pretty sure she knew what Albus was on about, but was not going to give the man the satisfaction. Whatever respect she had once had for the Old Man had died over the last year or so. She stayed on for the students, and now for the future of education. She was here to identify students for “transfer” to Japan and to both advise and run interference for those students who were



already in “The Club.” She doubted Albus suspected anything, although he was more than a little curious when she had pushed for making Nymphadora Tonks a Prefect over the recommendation of Pomona Sprout. Ms. Tonks was a distant third in Hufflepuff House on paper at the time, although her marks since the summer seemed to justify the choice.

“I thought the description of the wedding was quite well done,” she said. “Mr. Black did see fit to invite his old Head of House, you know. His bride is quite the young woman. It was a wonderful wedding...”

“I meant this article,” Albus said abruptly. The Headmaster turned to a page much further back revealing a headline she had indeed read:

#### BABY FACTORIES: WHAT OUR YOUNG WITCHES REALLY ARE DOING IN THE BRITISH MAGICAL SCHOOLS!

“Indeed I have,” Minerva said nonplused.

“Is this true?”

“I cannot state categorically that the numbers are one hundred percent accurate without check my records, but they are representative of the problem.”

“Why am I only learning of this now?”

“By law, female problems in school are to be handled by the school healer and senior witch on staff...”

“I am aware of that, but I thought that was – er – well, their – er – more regular biological issues. Not this!”

“The Unwed Parentage Act of 1798 defines ‘female problems’ to include pregnancy...”

“I seem to recall that the School Regulations require expulsion...”



“Only if the young witch desires to keep the child. Most choose to continue their education – or at least lose the child. And as you should know, terminating a pregnancy is illegal in our world.”

“Still, surely even I would have noticed a young, pregnant witch...”

“If they choose to remain in school,” Minerva replied, “they are taken to a special ward in the Hospital Wing. Most are diagnosed within two months of conception. Five days after conception, they give birth and are obliterated of all memories associated with the child and pregnancy before being returned to classes.”

“A time ward?” Albus asked in shock. “We’d need Ministry approval!”

“Hogwarts received approval for the Time Ward in 1817, about a year after the magic was patented by the Ministry. All schools are required to have one.”

“And just how did Lovegood come by this information?” Albus asked. “Just let it slip over a glass of punch?”

“He came by it in the Ministry Hall of Records when researching his Orphan story.”

“Are you saying this is Public Record?”

Minerva nodded. “The name, blood status and age of the mother upon giving birth; name, blood status and age of the father, if she revealed it; date and time of the diagnosis and birth; and the sex, length and weight of the child are all filed with the Ministry for Magic and are public record. The name of the child and identification of its adoptive parents are sealed.”

“Why are the parents’ names public record?” Albus asked almost rhetorically.

“The Purity Act of 1467 requires recordation of any information regarding a potential bride that might call into question her – erm – virtue. The Act was amended in 1823 to require this information be available to potential grooms and their families. Although according to



Mr. Lovegood, the Archivists have not had anyone check those records in over eighty years.”

“Well, I’m sure it’s not that big a problem. Lovegood must be off a deep end again, much ado about nothing,” Albus began seeming to accept the law as it was, and all the associated consequences. “Surely not here. I assume the other schools, however...”

“Then you assume wrong, Albus.”

“Excuse me?”

“On average two hundred and twenty ‘Muggle Borns’ are born in any given year. Between seventy and seventy-five of those are actually born to witches who are still in school and placed for adoption in the Muggle World. Hogwarts contributes the majority of those babies, on average between fifty and sixty. Basically for every fully qualified witch or wizard who finish this school each year, there is a baby that is born here as well.”

“But that’s ... twice as many babies as witches who finish? What are you telling me? All the witches who attend here wind up having a child?”

“It’s not quite that extreme,” Minerva replied, “but it is not good either. Oddly, the problem is mainly with the Purebloods...”

“Explain! I would have thought the problem would be with the Muggle Borns given their societies mores.”

“And what do you mean by that?” Minerva asked.

“Have you ever been to a Muggle beach, Minerva? They parade around...”

“I most certainly have, Albus. I can assure you their cultural choice of bathing costumes is not reflective of their societal mores, as you put it. To be honest, we have almost no problem with our ‘Muggle raised’ girls. They are taught about reproductive matters – and how to avoid them – both in their schools and frequently in their homes.



Statistically, one in twenty-five or less will have a child while at this school, which may actually be higher than a similar Muggle girl their own age. Our problem, as you put it, comes from the girls raised in our world. Our society frowns on any such discussions with women before they come of age – which is usually well after it may be too late. We do not as a society frown upon teenagers giving into their baser impulses. The Muggles do.

“Now, the rate of pregnancy here does vary. Halfbloods are about half as likely to become pregnant as Pureblood witches and even then, the rate varies between the four houses.”

“How so?”

“Ravenclaws tend to have the lowest rate as a house. About one eight pureblood witches will give birth while they are here. Gryffindors and Hufflepuffs are about one in four – meaning one in four Purebloods get pregnant while they are here, and half that number of Halfbloods.”

“And Slytherin?”

“At least eight out of ten Pureblood witches will have at least one child while at school here. More than half of them will have more than one, statistically; some could give Molly Weasley a run for her money in that regard.”

“Why the difference? Why the problem with the Purebloods?”

“Slytherin extols the virtues and beliefs of the Pureblood aristocracy. Pureblood witches raised under that belief system are expected to marry and produce Pureblood heirs. They are also expected to keep their husbands from – well from creating any problems in regards to succession.”

Albus blinked.

“They are encouraged to learn how to please their husbands. They are encouraged to experiment and as the general belief in our society



is that a Pureblood witch's magic prevents conception prior to her leaving school..."

"I never heard that before..."

"Pureblood boys are not taught anything about reproduction except for being told about the carnal act itself. Our laws prohibit us from teaching about reproduction or from teaching our girls that the belief that one's magic prevents pregnancy is false. If anything, it may actually increase the likelihood of pregnancy."

Minerva had been raised in a liberal magical home and had an Aunt who was a Healer. She knew the true magical bird and bees before she first set off for Hogwarts. A witch's monthly reproductive cycle was like clockwork, without exception tied to the lunar cycle. While witches could begin their cycle on any given day during a lunar month, if, for example, they first ovulated on the 14th day of the lunar cycle, they would always ovulate on the 14th day. And, at their peak fertile phase, they were more likely to conceive than a Muggle, at least until they were taught magic that prevented it, which was usually after they had given birth to an heir. So a society that encouraged at least some of its young women to "experiment," as traditional Pureblood society did, encouraged underage pregnancy. Rather than deal with the issue directly, the Ministry long ago chose to sweep it all under the rug through time compression maternity wards and obliviation of the children involved. She explained all of this to Albus, who looked like he would need an anti-nausea potion when she finished.

The distinction between the Houses came down largely to which societal mores were dominant. Slytherin, dominated by Pureblood Tradition, effectively created an environment where most witches would become sexually active at a young age. Without any precautions, this meant a large number of Slytherin girls wound up in the special ward. The other three houses had one or at the most two Pureblood witches in any given year in their House. Their roommates generally were Muggle raised or had at least one Muggle raised parent and thus were brought up under a different tradition, one which discouraged sexual activity at a young age or, at the very least, encouraged preventative measure. Thus, the peer pressure worked in the opposite direction to an extent. Ravenclaws were the least at



risk in part because they seemed more interested in books than people.

“And Hogwarts is the worst of the schools in this regard?” Albus asked.

“We’re the only boarding school,” Minerva replied. All the others are day schools. The children live with their families, thus the opportunities for such activities is significantly less than it is here. There is far less adult supervision here at night than at home. For every adult on staff here who patrols after curfew, there are forty students or so. And none of them patrol the dormitories.”

“But we have precautions set up in the dorms! The boys cannot enter the girls’ rooms.”

“Yet nothing prevents the girls from entering the boys’ rooms. The beds have curtains. A silencing charm is a Third Year spell. Likewise, no one is monitoring what might be happening in the Common Rooms late at night. Through it the fact that there are far more classrooms, unused corridors, broom closets throughout this castle than can be monitored and it is impossible with our resources and the prohibitions on information to prevent their nocturnal activities.”

Albus nodded. He had never before really considered the implications on Educational Decree Number Eight. He recalled that it came about some two hundred years ago. He also recalled that it expressly prohibited teaching about human reproduction or any magics designed to interfere with such reproduction. What little Minerva told him was shocking enough, but to know that there could be no fundamental change without getting the Wizengamot to repeal that decree and the various acts that had led to this situation was infuriating.

True, there were things he might consider. He could segregate the girls from the boys – totally separate dorms, maybe even separate classes and dining facilities, but the Board of Governors would remove him for anything that even looked like a major departure from venerated tradition such as elimination of the Four Houses as both Dorms for all members and the primary source of friends.



"This would have been easier if Lovegood had named names," Albus though out loud rhetorically.

"That would not have worked," Minerva said. "The families would either claim he was spreading malicious gossip, had falsified official records or, if they believed him, would demand satisfaction from the putative fathers' families. You know where that would lead."

Albus nodded. A major outbreak of Blood Feuds would make the last War seem tame in comparison. But, while he knew ending this problem would take time, he was determined that his school would no longer be a breeding den. Every other scheme or thought he had had before was now of second importance to repairing the damage to his school's reputation. Besides, he knew he would be spending the next several weeks responding to letters from concerned parents about their daughters' virtue.

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 31st, 1989, POTTER HOUSE, LONDON, U.K.

Young Harry Potter stood at the end of the long dining table in the Banquette Hall of his ancestral home and the home where he lived with his extended family. Hermione sat to his right and Clarice to his left. Seated along the sides of the table were several people he knew and several he did not. All ten of the young people who had joined them in Japan the past summer were present along with their parents or, in the case of Neville and Susan Bones, their relative and Guardian. Also present were the six professors from the six different magical schools in Britain. The Grangers and Remus were there as was Lord Black, who had just spent the weekend at Camp W watching what these kids had learned and what they were teaching the young people who had joined them. Office W was present as well as Roger Grant and David Greengrass and his wife were present (and Mike Evans and now Remus.) There were six other pairs of adults, all parents of children who were attending magical school in Britain and who's children were also now part of the "Weedend Warriors" which was also known as "The Club." The only couple Harry knew were Arthur and Molly Weasley. All had spent at least a day at Camp W watching what was going on.



“Good evening,” Harry said in an amplified voice. “I am Harry Potter. I am nine years old and have been asked to talk because I’m one of three here who have two years under our belts – the others are my sister Clarice and Hermione seated beside me – and because my family’s Foundation is one of the major sponsors of what you saw this weekend. And Mr. Lovegood? Really enjoyed your last issue, but I think this meeting is not for publication. So, what are we doing?”

“I understand perfectly,” Mr. Lovegood replied, “and thank you.”

Harry explained that they had learned magic overseas and when they returned last summer, they had begun showing their friends what they had learned. Anyone who was part of “The Club” was being shown wandless arts to include wandless spell casting and control, mind magics and potions. Any student with a wand was learning wand magic as well, including magics taught overseas and not in Britain.

“These magics are denied us by our own government,” Harry said. “Much of what we show here and help others learn is not even allowed to be taught in school here. Why?”

“Because,” Lord Black said, “our government prefers sheep to lions. Many of you have been told these magics are either dark or too hard to learn. Well, as to the latter, you saw for yourselves. Even a child can learn and master these magics. So why then? Control. By limiting the amount and quality of magics we can learn and by controlling information regarding magics they consider dangerous, they can better control us and keep themselves where they are.”

Harry nodded. “For example, wandless magic. Most all witches and wizards educated here become slaves to their wands. Remove their wand and you remove their magic. If they want to subdue you, all they have to do is disarm you and you’re helpless. A different story if your wand is merely another tool, one that is useful but not essential. Our government does not like nor wish for change, or so I understand. Because they for all intents and purposes control our magic in many ways – by keeping us ignorant and through monitoring magics we can supposedly do – they can control dissent. But, were they to try



and suppress a skilled wandless magic user, they are as helpless against that as the wand dependent is helpless without their wand...”

This could have been dangerous line of discussion. Susan Bones was present with her Aunt and Guardian, Amelia Bones who was Head of Magical Law Enforcement and thus head of the forces that exerted control over dissent. Arthur Weasley was also a long serving, although lower level Ministry official and had close ties to Albus Dumbledore, whom Harry had been told was even more into control than the Ministry and generally better at it. Neville’s Gran was there as well and held a seat on the Wizengamot as Regent of House Longbottom. Any one of them could spill the beans. But they had all been vetted. To say they were dissatisfied with the government was a gross understatement. For years they had tried to change it from the inside and each in their own way was or had reached the breaking point. For Augusta, it was the change in her son this past summer than changed her attitude. For Arthur and Molly Weasley, it was a combination of the Boy-Who-Was-Abused scandal, which led to them falling out with Dumbledore and disgust with the government that kept him in power and the more recent revelations in the Quibbler. For Amelia, it was all of those and many more things.

Harry then went on, talking about the Watanabe School and the opportunities it provided for young people. Time Compression was discussed and explained in detail. The fact that parents were encouraged to volunteer as monitors or even professors, assuming they had the credentials, was also discussed.

“Our Club began over a year ago,” Harry said. “We started it just to help our friends learn magic – especially those who like us were considered too young here. But we quickly realized that what we should be doing is helping our friends so they could one day go to Japan with us and learn it all and so much more. Last year, thirty of our friends were in our Club and ten joined us this summer in Japan. They were from both Hogwarts and St. George’s. When we got back this summer, that number more than doubled. We then met with others to invite families from the other schools and we now have 264 members from all six schools, most all range from their Fourth Year down to the age of six.



“We are here tonight, in part to discuss another major expansion, from 264 to over 700 and how that will work both in terms of our Club and Clubs here, because each school here will have its own Club at that school, and with regard to sending each of those children to Japan in the next year or two. It will take all of us working together to see that at least some of the children of this country are not hobbled by a substandard education. The near term goal is up to one third of all magical children begin and continued their educations in Japan – that’s around 1500 or so by the summer of ’93. The long term and harder goal is to change things here so that any child can receive that education here in Britain one day. So, with that in mind...”

The discussions lasted well into the night.

MONDAY, NOVEMBER 1st, 1989, DIAGON ALLEY, LONDON, U.K.

The more Harry thought about it, the more certain things made no sense whatsoever. Recently, Sensei had revealed more about his life in the magical world, particularly when he was in school. That Harry had barely set foot in the Leaky Cauldron for the first time and was immediately recognized by all the patrons. That Harry had memories from around the age of eight of occasionally meeting a stranger dressed “oddly” who would shake his hand. Everyone knew that Harry on sight and as far as Sensei knew there were no pictures of that Harry prior to Hogwarts.

Harry never experienced any of that. He knew that at one time, before the Blood Wards went up between Clarice and himself, people knew about him. Even today, he was known as “The-Boy-Who-Was-Abused.” But unless the person had actually been introduced to him, he was just another nine year old out shopping with his family. Even those who did know him did not fawn over him or treat him like some celebrity.

Something was odd. From Sensei, and later from Minerva, Sirius, Remus and most recently Lord Black, Harry knew no one should have been able to recognize him in the other timeline, assuming they had been identical for almost eight years. The only witness to what happened to any of his parents or Voldemort for that matter who was alive was himself and he was only fifteen months old. Sirius arrived



on the scene first, some time after it all happened. It was this Dumbledore person who had concluded that Harry survived the Killing Curse and apparently that was front page news the next day. Even assuming that a photo existed of Harry at that age that made the paper, there was no way that anyone should have been able to recognize him ten years later – not without less help, that is.

Fortunately, that was not Harry Potter's fate in this timeline. He was as noticeable and anonymous as any other kid in the Alley. That was fine by him. His photo had been in the paper a few weeks ago for he was one of Sirius's groomsmen, but no one seemed to take any special note of him.

A twenty something year old young man soon interrupted them as they walked through the Alley with Rose and Lord Black. She was on her lunch break from the Granger Dental Practice office in Diagon Alley and Harry, Hermione and Clarice had come from home for lunch and some shopping and meet up with "Grandfather."

"Excuse me," the young man said in a friendly tone, "I am Alvin Jenkins. I am a freelance reporter for the Emerald Herald."

"The chief rival of the Daily Prophet," Lord Black explained.

"Indeed," the young man replied. "Anyway, I'm doing a follow-up piece on the articles in last week's Quibbler and I'm here asking for the opinions of the witches and wizards on the street, as it were. It won't take but a minute and I do not require your names." The man seemed honest enough.

"Which articles?" Lord Black asked.

"The ones about the deplorable treatment of our young people. You did read the ones about orphans and the schools?"

All five actually nodded.

There was a lengthy discussion during which it was revealed that Mrs. Granger was both a Muggle and an adoptive parent of magical children. She truthfully told the reporter that she and her husband



could not have children of their own and that they had both known about the magical world for years. A friend of the family, who was a witch had arranged the placement of the children. This was not technically true, but no point in revealing too much. The children said they had known about magic for a few years now and had many friends in the magical world, although they still lived mostly in the Muggle. And what was there opinion?

"I can't speak for others," Hermione said. "I don't mind how things turned out at all." Harry and Clarice agreed. "However, I don't think it is fair to witches and wizards who would make wonderful parents but can't for some reason. They should be allowed to adopt magical children." The others also agreed.

As to the article about the schools, Rose had quite an opinion about that. "I can assure you, Sir, when the time comes to send them to magical school I might consider sending my girls elsewhere! That situation is unconscionable! The article suggests that the other schools in Britain are not too bad. Seems they are probably no worse than most Muggle schools in that regard. But that Hogwarts place? Why would anyone want to send their daughters there?"

"What's really wrong," Hermione said, "is that the laws allow that to happen. At least I think that's what the article said. What kind of laws are those anyway?"

"Too right," Harry continued. "A government that is unable to help and protect those in its society that are the most vulnerable and helpless needs to change its laws. And babies and underage young women are vulnerable and helpless. A government that is unwilling to do so should be removed. A society that tolerates such a situation deserves whatever hell befalls them."

"Well said," Lord Black commented after the reporter left them. "And as you will learn when you study with me, we unfortunately have the government and society that is least desirable."

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 5th, 1989 – QUIBBLER PUBLISHING COMPANY, DIAGON ALLEY, LONDON, U.K.



Xenophilus Lovegood put down the previous day's copy of the Emerald Herald. He had a point to read any paper that commented upon anything he had written. He had a smile on his face. Of all the "wizard in the street" reactions that the reporter had placed in the article, only one of the people he had interviewed had been quoted. It was that of a young Harry Potter of London.

"The fuse has been lit," Xeno smiled to himself.



DISCLAIMER: That part of this world and those characters you've seen before belong to their Creator: JKR. The rest is mine - although I cannot quit my day job as I make no \$\$\$ from this...

A/N: This was originally going to be one chapter, but I decided to split it up. (It was already over 10,000 words.) The continuation will be posted within 24 hours or less. These is the last 'BIG' thing between now and Hogwarts...

## CHAPTER FORTY-SEVEN (A): AWAKENINGS

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 1st, 1989 – POTTER HOUSE, LONDON, U.K.

On the first floor of the large house next to where the children had their bedrooms was a large room where they had their desks, kept those toys they actually used and their own books. Mostly, however, this room was where they went to escape and spend time together away from adults or visitors or the cares and worries of their lives. It was one place where the three could be children again without worry of the outside world interfering. It was also a place where they could talk without someone else offering an opinion. They had been spending time more and more evenings in this room since the wedding and certainly since before the first weekend in November.

To say that November had been hectic would be a gross understatement. Clarice was busy at the clinic two to three days a week and had been assisting with Jasmine Lovegood during her three weeks in St. Mungo's. All three were busy preparing for each weekend – schedules mostly. As "The Club" was very informal, save for the uniform thing, it was not like they planned lessons in any detail, nor did they expect the other instructors to do so. Structured learning would occur when the members went to Japan. Still, with over seven hundred, even the informal nature demanded schedules.

It would have been easier, but the scandal caused by the Quibbler article had generated a demand for lessons that until then none of the three had ever thought about and only Clarice by virtue of her Healer training had actually studied. With members ranging in age from six to seventeen, they had to decide not just what to teach but who. In the end, all members age eleven and up would attend lessons on



human reproduction which would include both magical and non-magical ways to prevent such things. The younger kids would not receive such lessons, save for any girls who were medically mature beyond their years, which there were none. This posed a problem. While Clarice had no problem with the idea of teaching the girls for she did something like that at the clinic, boys were another issue altogether. She was genuinely concerned they might not take her seriously in this matter, even though they clearly took her seriously when it came to magic. After all, what boy would want to learn about that from an eight year old girl? In the end, Healer Tonks agreed to teach the boys. In addition to being male, he had the added advantage of being older and bigger than the lot of them.

That lesson had led to serious questions from the older girls about whether they might have “spent time in one of those rooms.” This had become a euphemism for having a kid. The memory charms used in the procedure spelled out by the Ministry eliminated memory of pregnancy and bearing a child, not the act that led to it, but the older girls fretted that maybe a mistake was made or something. In mid-November, the kids had spent two days in the Hall of Records looking through the relevant school reports. Clarice was certain that any girl currently Third Year or below, which included all but four of the almost two hundred and twenty girls age eleven or older, would not have been; but the group checked for any of them. Fortunately, none of them had been a victim of that Ministry policy. For full verification, Clarice performed an age revealing charm on all of them. If they had been subject to Time Compression and had no memory of it for any reason, there would be a discrepancy between the ages on their Club paperwork – which stated a number of days since their birth as of November 15th based upon their birth date and adjusted for those who had spent time in Japan – and the date the spell revealed. Again, there were no such discrepancies.

Ever since The Club had expanded, there were many in the know who wondered how long it could be kept secret. Harry had heard a rumor that the Weasley boys had a pool going with dates ranging from as early as the end of November through 1996. To participate, the better had to swear an oath of some sort that they would not reveal the secret or cause the secret to be revealed. Apparently, only



Harry, Hermione and Clarice were not in the pool by the end of the month.

Exposure of The Club was a real issue, primarily because everyone involved believed that the ruling class in Magical Britain would not stand for it at all, particularly since many of the children or grandchildren of such class would probably have been excluded due to the elitist views of their families. Last year there had been an unofficial Club of seven students at St. George's, five of whom attended Watanabe School in Japan during the past summer and three of whom had not returned to finish their Seventh Year. Hogwarts had no similar Club as there was only one Club Member in school at the time: Dora Tonks. A Club with only one member is a fairly lonely club.

But this year there were now six Clubs in six schools. Hogwarts Club now had fifty-five members with Dora as its head student. St. George's had grown from seven to eighty-three members with Amber Evans as its head student. The four "new" schools now had their own School Clubs averaging seventy-seven members. They had their own Club Room at their schools and their own faculty advisor / sponsor. They formed along the lines of the informal club at St. George's and existed to support each other, have a safe place to practice the skills they were learning outside of the Ministry's approved syllabus, and talk about the Club while at school while not exposing it to others. In short, the School Clubs existed to support The Club and the learning while keeping it all quite and as secret as possible. Most members enjoyed the notion of being members of a "Secret Society," even though they all knew that one day it would no longer be that. If everything went well, that one day would come at a time well after the ruling elite could do anything to stop it.

Still, they and others were worried, especially when they learned that the School Clubs were not totally secret. But their minds were put to rest when they learned that most all other students (those not in the Clubs) could care less and the handful of adults who picked up on something took no interest in a club full of kids who meditated and performed what appeared to be simple parlor tricks. The ruling elite had banned the teaching of the magic they were learning long ago; so long ago, in fact, that it seemed as if they now believed only the



most powerful and brilliant of magicians could possibly learn it ever. It was easy to pull the wool over someone's eyes when they had already done it to themselves.

Aside from Hogwarts and St. George's, none of the Clubs had members who had ever been to Japan, much less the Watanabe School. Aside from Hogwarts, all the other schools were day schools and the Clubs met after classes were over. Hogwarts had only one student who had been to the Watanabe School, Dora Tonks, and it seemed that most people left her alone. By the end of November, Harry was fairly certain that the flagrant disregard for tradition and the spirit if not the letter of the law would remain unnoticed for now. The real challenge going forward would be next year when the six schools could boast over four hundred I.C.W. O.W.L. or higher recipients between them.

Yet the School Clubs were necessary and impossible not to notice. They were, after all, the largest faculty sponsored clubs at all of the schools, even Hogwarts (where only the Houses were actually larger for now). They were necessary both because as a group to practice with (and study with) and because the members could only meet to learn new things once every two weekends. There were just too many for the thirteen Watanabe kids to handle efficiently. Even with the members from last year helping, and they did, it was too many to handle at one time. That would change next year, but for now they had to make do with the Clubs.

Each "School Community" meaning every child who was either attending a particular school or would attend that school was divided into two groups with as nearly equal a number of children of each age in each group. One group would attend on one weekend, another the next weekend. Of course, the younger children could not take advantage of the School Clubs on their off weeks to practice in groups. Those children between the ages of six and ten met at Camp W every week for a few hours on Wednesday for an equivalent club led by Harry, Hermione, Clarice, Neville, Luna and Susan. Some of the older members complained until it was pointed out that the members of the "Camp W Clubs," would not be attending school in Japan this next summer while all of the current "School Club" members would.



The whole thing was new to everyone and as the three most senior Watanabe Students were at least notionally in charge, everything seemed to land on them. They were quick to delegate as much as possible to the subordinate Clubs, keeping their focus insofar as possible on the weekend meetings. Still, not everything could be delegated. There needed to be coordination between the schools and families of the younger members to make things happen and that fell to them and the adults who were there to help them.

For example, while running the necessary interference with the individual school faculties to get members to the weekend sessions fell to the various schools' faculty sponsor, actually getting the members there was the province of "The High Command," as the sometimes annoying Weasley twins had dubbed Harry, Hermione and Clarice. "Security" at the schools was the responsibility of each of the School Clubs, but all ideas in that regard crossed the childrens' desks. After all, if it was a good idea, it needed to be shared with the other schools. The Weasley Twins had dubbed this part of the Club "The Idiot Worthy Excuse Committee," which was a take on a Ministry Office that planted plausible non-magical explanations for magical events with the relevant Muggle authorities.

Two interesting ideas had risen from the schools to "The High Command" within a week of the final expansion for this year. One was for a newsletter or newspaper, which Luna seemed more than willing to work on for The Club, but at least for the Hogwarts Club, there were security issues to work out before they could safely receive copies (although Hermione was thinking that they could send a copy to Minerva which would then be made available to the Hogwarts members.) The other schools were not a problem as sending it to their homes would be relatively secure.

The other idea was a Quidditch League. This had been raised at the first meeting of the fully expanded Club at the beginning of November. Sunday afternoon was when they learned physical things or Muggle things. Why not have a Quidditch Match between two of the schools? Camp W had a Quidditch pitch after all. The overwhelming support for this idea all but silenced any protest from Hermione who could not or would not understand the fascination with that game. The WISE



League, as Harry dubbed it (for Welsh, Irish, Scottish, English) was still in the planning stages, although Harry had it on good authority that the six schools were already picking starters and reserves. One thing Hermione liked about the idea was it was an additional cover for what was really going on.

The good news was they had time to get this organized. Harry had already worked out that if they had one match a week, in fifteen weeks all the teams would play each other. They could have their first match as late as mid February and still have a full season plus a championship game between the two best teams before they were off to Japan.

But the younger kids wanted to play too, enough to field “junior” teams from all six School Communities. It was obvious to Harry that the Junior teams could not simply go to their future schools and book a pitch. That would certainly catch someone’s attention. Fortunately, the Camp W pitch was almost never used, so arrangements could be made to allow the Junior teams practice times during the week. But two leagues meant additional problems. Most notably how could two six team leagues compete on one pitch, one afternoon a week and complete a season before the end of June.

Harry had an idea, although he knew the Quidditch purists would be upset. He was working on this idea when Clarice came into the room having returned from her day at the Clinic. She looked like she was dead on her feet.

“Rough day?” Hermione asked.

Clarice nodded. “There was a riot in Diagon Alley this morning. Hundreds were injured and there were more than a few Clinic patrons among them. Been patching people up all day!”

“What was it about?” Hermione gasped.

“Yesterday’s Wizengamot session,” a female adult voice said. They turned and saw that Lord Black and Aunt Minnie had seemingly followed Clarice into the room.



“What about it?” Hermione asked.

“Well,” Lord Black said, “it was the first time the Wizengamot took up the issue about the schools since the Quibbler article.”

“And that caused a riot?”

“The issue was supposed to be in closed session for hearings,” Lord Black continued, “just like last year and the abuse hearings that resulted in the Magical Child Welfare Act. Somehow word of the session leaked out and there was a crowd of people who tried to show up and claim Visitor seats in the Gallery. How the word got out is not known – yet. But after the Ministry’s actions a couple of weeks ago, it’s not surprising there was some interest in the mind of the public at large.”

“And what was that?” Harry asked.

“I really need to start including Current Events in your lessons,” Lord Black commented before continuing. “Just about every office in the Ministry was being inundated with letters from the public regarding the Quibbler article. There were those who were adopted by Muggles who wanted to know if they had magical parents or not. Some wanted to know who those parents were and demanded that if they were the oldest son or child of some rich family they should be told so they could take their rightful place in society. Others wanted the information buried so deep in the Department of Mysteries that no mortal would ever know the truth or a law passed that would forever bar any claims of inheritance and still others demanding a statement from the Minister for Magic that the Quibbler article was a pack of lies.

“A couple of weeks ago, on order of the Undersecretary for the Director of the Department for Regulation and Control of Magical Creatures supposedly ordered all relevant records burned saying that it was on the order of the Minister for Magic. She was not questioned and the records were burned. Again, this was not supposed to be known, but the Archivists who did not question the order, also did not



keep quiet. Apparently, the person who ordered them to burn the records hadn't bothered to invoke any secrecy oaths.

"All of this was duly reported in the Daily Prophet, although the Ministry managed to convince them to publish a retraction within a couple of days. Of course, the damage had been done. Everyone was convinced the Ministry was deliberately hiding something and the Howlers were flying, prompting the Minister to call an emergency session of the Wizengamot.

"Now there hasn't been an emergency session since the War. Back then security procedures were incredibly tight. Every member of the Wizengamot would be searched by an Auror before entering the Chamber and any magical item, including wands, would be confiscated to be returned when the member left. This did not happen yesterday. The two Aurors who were present didn't look like they were old enough to remember the War."

"You were there?" Harry asked.

Lord Black nodded. "I admit it's been almost twenty years since I took the Black seat, but I went. I was curious. I also felt it was my duty in a way seeing as I've been asked to teach you kids about government and such. I guess I wanted to see what is happening rather than rely on memory and old journals.

"Anyway, it seems that while only Members were admitted, someone brought something in they should not have."

"What?" the three asked after a pause.

Lord Black shrugged and looked at Minerva.

"Somehow," Minerva said, "the entire closed session was broadcast on the Wizarding Wireless Network."

"Oops," Harry said with a smile.



“Oops indeed,” Lord Black smiled. “And not just the formal session but several private conversations beforehand. From what Minerva’s told me, anyone listening would have had an idea what the major positions on the issue were, and there were several factions.

“The Pro-Muggle Born faction generally wanted the information sealed, provided that all laws favoring or disfavoring individuals based upon their Blood Status be repealed and that the law never again make any distinctions based upon parentage or magical heritage. They would also require full disclosure of parentage and that the inheritance laws recognize any claims of older born sons. They would include allowing anyone to seek the opportunity to take any vacated seat in the Wizengamot. How that was to happen they had no idea but figured such details could be worked out.

“On the opposite side, the Pureblood Elitists wanted the Wizengamot to commend the Ministry employee who had the records destroyed and wanted a law passed banning the release of any similar records or the use of any method that might be used to dispute one’s heritage or blood status. They also wanted a law passed barring anyone who was not raised in the magical world from full citizenship. Basically, anyone raised in the Muggle world would have no rights in the magical one aside from a right to learn about magic. The Elitists considered that an appropriate compromise.”

“That’s it?” Harry asked.

Lord Black shrugged.

“But that doesn’t even begin to solve the problem,” Hermione protested. “They’re just going to let girls get pregnant? They just going to use that to advance unrelated political issues?”

“So it seemed,” Lord Black said. “There were a few of us who wanted to address the real issue, but we were a minority.”

“And what did you want?” Clarice asked.



“We were hardly in agreement on all points,” Sensei replied. “First off, the one thing we could agree upon was that the current policy regarding underage out-of-wedlock pregnancies had to be changed. The secrecy had to end. How was another matter. Secondly, we were in agreement that the records had to be somewhat open. Could not agree on how much.”

“But I thought you said the records were destroyed,” Hermione said.

“The copies in the Hall of Records were,” Lord Black replied. “But they are just that, copies. There are copies in the Department of Mysteries sealed archives which could be copied and made available. There are also copies in Gringotts which are outside the Ministry’s jurisdiction. Finally, there are the originals which are kept at each of the schools which are also out of the Ministry’s jurisdiction.”

“Why?” Harry asked.

“Because the I.C.W. has jurisdiction over school records,” Minerva said. “It was a concession we had to make ages ago for I.C.W. certifications. Without it our O.W.L.s and N.E.W.T.s would not be recognized by any other country.”

“So they did nothing,” Clarice said. “They just sat there and let this thing continue.”

Lord Black shrugged. “It’s the Wizengamot. They hold their seats by heredity, not by popularity. To take action would have opened them up to challenge.”

“How so?” Hermione asked.

“The law for attaining a seat is clear,” Lord Black said. “The eldest male of a Member Line is seated. If there is no such male, a woman is designated regent until that line has a male to take their rightful seat.

“Now the law that establishes the right to rule does not make any distinction about marriage. If I had a son older than Orion out of



wedlock, that son would be the heir to my seat - period. I did not, but..."

"How can you be sure?" Hermione asked.

"My wife Melania was my best friend from boyhood. She was my one and only. We were both - er - well - let's just say our first child, my daughter Lucretia, was our first child and she was born about a year after we married."

"And your wife?" Clarice asked.

Lord Black seemed to look off for a bit and they all could swear there was a tear trying to form in his eyes.

"Died of Dragon Pox about two years ago," he said finally. "Until Sirius and you lot entered my life some months later, I was more than willing to waste away and join her. I still miss her terribly. But she would give me a tongue lashing for picking her over you lot right now. When I see her again - one day - I want her to be proud of me as she once was."

"What do you mean?" Harry asked.

"I became Lord Black upon the death of my father in 1952. Before then, I was the Black Sheep of my family. I was an idealist who wanted to see my world changed for the better even if it harmed my Clan. That was the man my Melania married. That was the boy she fell in love with - the idealist. It died in a way when I had to take my father's place. My father was murdered, you see, and I and my Melania ... well, I was not about to get dead for an idea unless I thought that idea would win in the end.

"Dumbledore was the leader of The Light then, just as he still can claim to be today. His world view and mine were very different. He believed - and still believes - that an enlightened ruling elite is in the best interests of our world. I, on the other hand, cannot see a government that does not derive its existence from the will of the governed and cannot stay in power without their support. I was not



alone, but my like minded friends fell to the same ill that took away my youth - the reality of things.

“The ruling elite will not willingly change. They will not relinquish power. They will not let the opinions or needs of the ruled guide their decisions. They will not do anything that would or could result in them losing what they have. That is our government. It is a Ministry of the privileged supported by the privileged for the privileged and they will keep their monopolies at all cost.

“They took no action against the Death Eaters during the War until they realized they were to be supplanted. By then it was too late. But for a fortuitous turn of fortune, the Death Eaters and Pureblood Supremacists had that War won. Our government took no action because they quietly agreed with the movement. They did not want the ‘masses’ to have a say or rights. Those few who did constituted a minority.

“That government still rules over us all. It is not the government I would have wanted for my Clan - that is until I realized most of my Clan were ‘Them.’ But for the majority of our People, and because that government is a threat to the Crown, I stand quietly opposed, as I did yesterday.

“I showed up for the first time in almost thirty years. I said nothing. I did nothing. I was not there to govern but to bear witness. When the vote came - and in that vote our leaders decided to do nothing - I abstained. It was a symbolic thing. In doing so, I announced quietly that I had come to see change and would not support any who opposed change. But it was a safe way, I confess.

“Change is necessary. Goodness knows the havoc the teen pregnancy policy has caused. It is entirely possible that there are Pureblood families out there a little more pure than any would like...”

“As in?” Harry asked.

“Brothers and sisters - or at least half brothers and sisters having children,” Lord Black said.



“That happened?” Clarice asked.

“Can’t say. It is not likely, but possible. Throw in the inheritance issues and...”

“So what are you saying, Grandfather?” Harry asked.

“I came to this conclusion before you lot were born,” Lord Black said. “Our world here in Britain cannot be reformed. It must be replaced.”

“And what did you do?” Hermione began.

“I did nothing. That much I will admit and I admit I am not proud of it. But I came to that conclusion when I was a Grandfather. That is not my excuse, but it is to those who can see the benefit of change who should seek it. It is to a younger generation to see change through, not those of us who have lived for too long under the status quo.

“My role is now to teach you, the next generation. My role is to let you decide what kind of world you want to live in and what kind of world you want to leave to your children. If you make this world a better place than the one you were born in - well, that is something. If I had but a hand in doing that, then I can join my Melania without regret. I will have made her proud, which is all I want at this stage of my life.”

“You’re talking revolution, you know,” Minerva said.

Lord Black nodded. “One day indeed. Just not yet.”

“Why?” Hermione asked. “Why not now?”

“The seeds have only begun to be sowed,” Lord Black replied. “A long time ago a great man - a revolutionary - said that the people must feel before they can see. He meant that while change might be obvious, until everyone feels its necessity, they will resist it.”



“So the riots?” Harry asked.

“First time for everything,” Lord Black said. “Never happened before. But it is merely a start.”

“And us? How do we fit in?” Clarice asked.

“That has yet to be determined,” Lord Black replied. “But this Club of yours might one day be important.”

To say that Sensei was dumbfounded was an understatement. His mission was to make sure that Voldemort was dealt with before Voldemort and his followers could lead the entire world to its doom. To do that, all Sensei had to do was to teach a young version of his Creator and self to find and destroy some horcruxes. That was his mission.

His arrival time was based upon the impact of a death on his timeline's Harry Potter: Sirius Black. That was because that the death of the one family member the original Harry had was too blinding and traumatic in its long term consequences. The original Harry took fewer risks with himself and with and because of those he cared about later. That was the reason he married the wrong woman. That was the reason for a lot of things that one day went wrong for him.

But what had happened in the less than two years since Sensei first made his appearance was beyond anything his Harry or even he had ever considered. The future was now changed beyond all recognition in many ways. This new Harry was a truly different person and one who would not be mired in the past as his former self had been. In many ways, Sensei's time was over for the changes had exceeded his ... programming.

Sensei was still needed, he knew. The Voldemort Horcruxes were still out there. In all cases only he knew both where they were and how to get to them. But even in his Creator's youth, there was nothing beyond Voldemort. This new Harry and his friends were now looking at the beyond. Chaos theory was just that - chaos.



FRIDAY, DECEMBER 22nd, 1989, DEPARTMENT OF MAGICAL CHILD WELFARE, MINISTRY OF MAGIC, LONDON, U.K.

Three weeks had passed since the now famous “Baby Riot” in Diagon Alley. While things in magical Britain had calmed down somewhat, it was only as compared to the week following the riot. The riot had started when a group of Pureblood Elitists gloated publically about the inaction in the Wizengamot and how it kept the Muggle Borns “in their place.” Unfortunately, there were many non-Purebloods in the vicinity who took offense and were not in any mood to simply ignore the slight and walk away. A heated argument turned into a brawl and then a riot that would require a third of the on duty Aurors to contain. Not surprisingly, there were a number of arrests.

However, when it became known that not one Pureblood had been arrested, despite being in the thick of it and supposedly looting a few stores that were not Pureblood owned, a series of demonstrations and boycotts broke out. The Wizengamot refused to act, although there were rumors that many of its members who were not thrilled with the reforms that had been enacted since the War were hoping to use the times as an excuse to rid themselves of the Minister for Magic, whom they considered the worst sort of politician if for no other reason than she did not speak or act like a good Pureblood should. While the Wizengamot refused to act and seemed intent on throwing all the rioters in jail, the Minister had done what she could. She saw to it that not one of the arrested rioters were ever charged and all were released within a couple of days. But more importantly, and less well known at the time, she gave the Department of Child Welfare additional authority to deal with the crisis.

Arthur Weasley saw his department nearly double in size. Both the Department of Mysteries and the Hall of Records supplied the expanded department with copies of all of the records that another department had attempted to destroy. These records were additional copies and the Minister tasked Arthur to use them as he saw fit. While the Ministry needed the Wizengamot to act to deal with the laws regarding underage pregnancy, the records were not subject to any laws restricting their use save that the children’s names and adoption information was sealed.



Arthur's people were busy sifting through the over 8,000 files of Time Chamber children that had been compiled since the policy went into effect in 1817. It was left to Arthur to determine whether and to what extent any of the information in any of the files would be released and to whom. Arthur had already decided that it would not be made available to just anyone. While they were still working on the details, the outline of the policy set to go into effect after the New Year would allow any Muggle Born to learn whether they had been born of magical parents and any adult witch or wizard to learn whether they had children they did not know about. The requesting parties could also authorize disclosure of their names and information to either their unknown parent or child, but such information would not be sent unless said unknown parent or child asked.

Arthur knew that there would be some families interested in finding unknown relations. There were at least two Ancient and Noble lines that were on the verge of ending due to the lack of any known male heir. There were also a few hereditary seats on the Wizengamot that would be vacated in time under similar circumstances. At least a few of those families would rather have an alleged Muggle Born or Halfblood as heir to their family legacy than allow it to end or claimed by what they considered a less acceptable relation.

For the most part, however, information would not be released regarding any files where the person was either dead or designated "whereabouts unknown." Arthur felt he lacked such authority in general but more importantly felt it was not the purpose of his Department to completely turn society on its head. Those who wanted to know about their personal connection to the Time Chambers would be allowed to find out. The merely curious would be denied any access to the records. Arthur knew there were at least some possible descendants of the Time Chambers who would like to use that information for ill and knew the final policy had to make such ill use near impossible. It was a daunting task, but one he felt was the best way to deal with the current crisis.

A/N: "The people must feel before they can see." George Washington, regarding the need for the Constitutional Convention in 1784. It was not yet ripe. The People still believed the existing governmental



structure was fine. When most were ruined by it, then the whole thing could be scrapped.



## CHAPTER FORTY-SEVEN (B): AWAKENINGS II

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 23rd, 1989 - ST. MUNGO'S HOSPITAL  
LONG CARE WARD, LONDON, U.K.

For the three young people who considered Potter House their home, it seemed that time was flying by. They lived in both the magical and non-magical world and with the magical world in an uproar, their time in public was mostly in the much quieter Muggle world. Their time in the magical world was spent at Black Manor, Camp W, and the homes of their magical friends. Places like Diagon Alley were avoided simply because it seemed there were protests there almost daily. Of course, this had meant that their Christmas shopping was done mostly in Muggle London, but they were sure no one would really mind.

They had been exceedingly busy for people their age. Clarice spent two days a week at the clinic. For all of them, three days a week were spent at Camp W and many nights preparing for those three days. Time was spent at Black Manor as well as they were taking lessons with Lord Black and, to Hermione's great pleasure, spending time in the vast Black library. Hermione did not know it, but between the Black library and the Potter library, she and the others had access to perhaps the most comprehensive collection of magical works in Britain.

By the end of September, they had completed their "Missions" for the year. Two horcruxes were gone. Luna's Mum had survived her accident and she and her unborn children were doing quite well. Despite everything else, they wanted something else to work on. If there was one drawback to the Watanabe School it was that one got used to being busy all the time. That, and their biggest distraction from working on something, Sirius Black, had been away for two months on holiday with his new wife.

Of their own accord, they set themselves on a new mission. This was one that Sensei had mentioned as a possibility but it had also been suggested they needed more time in school for there to be success. While the three did not doubt that might be the case, they could still get a start on it. This mission was to help their friend Neville if it was



at all possible. Specifically, they were going to find out if there was any way to cure Neville's parents who were currently in the long term spell damage ward at St. Mungo's and whose condition was deemed permanent.

Clarice had taken advantage of her visits to St. Mungo's following the accident to Jasmine Lovegood. During Jasmine's stay in the Hospital, Clarice had been her Healer of Record, supposedly a visiting foreign Healer who had happened to be passing by on a tour of the magic sights in Devonshire when the accident had happened. The one nice thing about more than a fair few witches and wizards was they did not ask a lot of questions. This might also be why Magical Britain was as messed up as the three youngsters thought it was.

Neville's parents' charts said they had been admitted to the long term ward following prolonged exposure to the Crutiatius Curse that had resulted in permanent catatonic states. Something from her Healer training told Clarice that the diagnosis made no sense. During her visits to Neville's parents, she performed her own examination of the subjects and her results contradicted those of the Healers on the ward. Her results did not show the decreased brain activity of a person who was catatonic. If anything, the two Longbottom's minds seemed to be normal, if agitated, under magical examination.

Clarice further learned, thanks to the Black library, that the persistent condition was not one associated with even prolonged exposure to the Curse. While there had been patients who did suffer an apparent mental collapse after days of magical torture, their catatonic state was temporary. The patient either recovered consciousness or died within six to ten weeks. There was not one case of a victim of the Curse being rendered insane on a permanent basis, certainly not for eight years, and yet here were two whose condition was unique. Moreover, the records they were able to obtain showed that the attack and torture of the Longbottoms had taken at most five hours, not the days necessary to create the mental collapse. Something else had happened to the Longbottoms that day. The big question was what.

Once again, there was an answer in the Black library, although this time it was Hermione who stumbled upon it. Hermione had decided



that she was going to study for a Mastery in Spell Crafting when she returned to Japan. The great thing in her mind about having access to the private libraries of two ancient houses was she also had access to their families magical journals. It was a popular misconception that families, especially old families, kept large books on their ancient, private magics, both spells and potions. First of all, not every generation had a witch or wizard who experimented with magic. Even where they did, it was not required that they actually write down and keep their discoveries. While it was true that some families had a scholar at one point or another that tried to compile the centuries of their private magic into a single tome, this was not a common practice. In most instances, one had to have access to centuries of personal journals and sift through the day to day musings and observations to find a magic spell that the author had either created or discovered and deemed worth recording.

What was both interesting to Hermione and more than a little annoying were how many of the spells were actually common knowledge, although she assumed that centuries ago maybe they were not. A fair few of the spells she found in the Potter and Black journals seemed either impractical, unreliable, inefficient as compared to more common spells, or just plain silly. Still, she found spells she had not seen before that seemed like they would work and was surprised as to how many would be considered dark or harmful. Even the Potter family, long associated with Light Magic, had more than a few really nasty spells in their journals. Hermione surmised that these vicious spells were invented and kept secret to defend against attacks. As the spells would not be known to an assailant, it would come as a nasty shock.

One spell in a Black journal from the mid-fifteenth century piqued her interest. It did not have a name, for most private spells were not named. Also, like most private spells, it was meant to be cast without incantation. Again, this both increased the surprise should it be used and would prevent all but those family members who knew it from using it against them. This spell supposedly trapped its victim within their own mind and was said to resemble the effect of the Dememtor's Kiss, without actually separating the soul from the person. The spell had a counter-curse, but the only one she was able to find required that it be cast with the same wand that cursed the



victim in the first place. Hermione was certain there was another way to lift the curse, it was just that the spell was so rare, no one bothered to find out how.

Lord Black confirmed that it was possible that his cousin Bellatrix LeStange might well have come across that spell as a youth. He doubted she had taught it to anyone. Bella shared nothing. But if Bella knew that spell, it was possible she had been the caster and it was possible that the spell was the real reason for the Longbottoms' condition.

Six people now stood in the long term ward at St. Mungo's in a small screened cubical that contained two patients: Frank and Alice Longbottom. The patients' eyes were open, but neither one was responsive, just as Clarice and the others expected. Along with Clarice, Harry and Hermione were Neville, his Gran and their friend Luna. Clarice and Hermione explained what they believed had happened to the Longbottoms and Neville's Gran Augusta was doing her best to maintain her composure. She was incensed that these "children" had been able to come up with a working theory while the people charged with the care of her son and daughter-in-law seemingly had done little or nothing. Her ire was not directed at the children. That Neville had such friends and that he himself was developing similar skills was more than she had once hoped for. Her ire was directed at the adults who were either too lazy or too incompetent to try and help her family.

"So what's the plan?" Augusta asked.

"Well," Hermione replied, "if we are right, we should be able to find out through Legilimency. We might even be able to make contact with them. Although for now, that is about all we can do."

"Y-you can do that?" Augusta asked. In Britain this was a rare skill that few mastered.

"Gran," Neville said, "we all can to one degree or another. Harry, Hermione and Clarice have five years more experience than I, and I



have three years with this. Against an undefended mind, I can gain some access.”

“But you’re not going to do it?”

“We’ll see.”

“We feel we might get better results,” Clarice continued, “assuming we’re right, if first contact is made by someone they do not know. If you or Neville were to go first, there is a possibility they would either react with some form of hostility or believe they are losing it altogether. Remember, if we are right, they have been alone in there for eight years, so it is best to limit the shock.” Clarice was going to monitor the patients to determine their reaction to the “procedure.” Harry and Hermione would be the ones trying to make contact.

“And you?” the formidable woman asked turning towards Luna.

“Neville and the others were there for me when my Mum almost died,” Luna said. “I am here for my friends.”

Augusta nodded.

Harry found himself in the middle of a black void with a large, white door being the only object visible. He had seen this before, or at least something like this. It was not an uncommon form of active occlumency defense against an unwanted mind probe. It could be a trap or a trick to keep him away from what he sought. But he also remembered what his Mind Magic Professors had told him. Sometimes a door is just a door.

Still, he approached with caution just in case. If it was a trap and unless this mind’s defenses were exceptionally well prepared, he would be able to detect it without setting it off. Mind traps could be a problem, he knew. His own were. His defenses were designed to either block an assailant, expel them with varying degrees of force, or lure them into a trap which would allow him full access to their minds through most of their shields. This last defense was just that. Only



one persistent and good enough to bypass his other traps would get that far. Knowing this, caution was prudent.

It was just a door.

Harry opened it and found himself in a grand entry not unlike the entry into Black Manor. The space beyond, which he could only guess was a mind space, looked like a Manor House. Slowly he walked in, peeking into the various parlors and salons on either side of the entry hall.

“May I help you, Young Master?” a high pitched voice asked.

Harry looked at the source and saw what looked to be a House Elf. She was maybe three feet tall with the large and soft eyes common to her kind, along with the caricature for a nose and bat like ears. This was a mindscape, Harry knew. A dream of sorts created by the person whose mind he had entered. Based upon his conversation with Hermione, he was certain this was not the trick of an occlumency defense, but a place that made the person feel less like a prisoner. The elf was not real, but probably existed in this place to stave off a sense of loneliness.

“Er, yes,” Harry replied. “I was wondering if the Mistress was at home?”

“She never leaves,” the Elf replied. “She does not entertain. Are you expected?”

Harry shook his head. “I’m a friend of her family. I was in the neighborhood and decided to pop by for a visit, if the Mistress will see me.”

The elf seemed to nod in understanding. “I shall inquire, Young Master. Please take a seat in the parlor to your right.”

Harry nodded and did as he was told. The room was comfortably furnished and looked like it was designed for teas and meeting guests, but Harry had the sense that unless said guest was purely a figment



of the occupant's imagination there had not been any. Upon the walls were paintings. Most were landscapes of one sort or another. The portraits he saw he would guess were family, primarily because the largest was of a younger Alice and Frank Longbottom with a baby boy in the young woman's arms.

"May I help you?" a voice asked. The voice was cold, suspicious and almost hostile.

Harry looked up and saw a young looking Alice Longbottom in the door standing there with her arms folded. Whether her posture was defensive or defiant was hard to tell. Remembering the lessons in courtesy he had learned both from the Grangers and more recently Lord Black, Harry stood.

"Lady Longbottom, I presume?" Harry said with a slight bow.

The woman nodded. "I am. You're my jailor, I presume."

"Jailor?" Harry asked in some confusion.

"I will admit I did not expect a mere boy, but considering I cannot escape from this place and am quite unarmed, I suppose even a boy would do."

"No Ma'am, not a jailor. Do you know where you are?"

"A Manor of some sort. I woke up here ages ago and cannot get out. If not a jailor, who are you? Aside from Deedee and Farschal the elves, I've had no company."

"My apologies, Ma'am. Harry James Potter at your service," Harry said with a deeper vow.

The woman seemed to pale and go weak at the knees and quickly made for a chair. She sat down and placed her face in one hand.

"James and Lily's boy?" she asked.



Harry nodded.

“That’s not possible,” she said. “You’re only a day older than my Neville and he’s just a baby!”

“We all were once,” Harry said.

“I’ve finally gone round the twist, haven’t I?” she said more to herself than to Harry.

“I can assure you, Ma’am, you seem quite sane under the circumstances. We expected some degree of disbelief which is why I am here and not Neville.”

“Neville? Where is my son? How is he?” she seemed almost desperate.

“Perhaps I should explain?” Harry asked. “May I sit?”

Mrs. Longbottom nodded.

After Harry sat down in a chair across from his hostess he continued. “I’ll begin by answering one of your questions. This,” Harry said waving an arm indicating the room they were in, “is a mindscape.”

“That almost makes sense,” Mrs. Longbottom said, “considering. But how is this possible? Where am I really? What day is this?”

“What is the last day you remember,” Harry asked remembering Clarice had told him not to reveal too much at one time.

“November 14th, 1981,” she said. “Neville was visiting his Gran and Frank and I were at home when we were attacked by four Death Eaters. We gave them a fight, but they eventually took us down and began torturing us. I blacked out and woke up here. Never even saw who they were with those infernal masks, but one was definitely Bellatrix LeStrange.”



Harry nodded. "She was. The others were her husband, his brother and Barty Crouch."

"The Head of Law Enforcement?" Alice asked in shock. "He was a Death Eater?"

"No," Harry said. "A right nasty piece of work, but no Death Eater. The Death Eater was his son."

"What happened?" Alice asked.

"The Death Eaters who attacked you were captured by a team of Aurors that day. Three of them have been in Azkaban ever since. The Barty Crouch you knew was arrested last year for facilitating the escape of his son and for the false imprisonment of Sirius Black..."

"But he betrayed James and Lily Potter!" Alice protested.

"He never stood convicted of any crime," Harry said in a calm tone. "Until a year ago, he was never even given a trial. He was acquitted in minutes when the real traitor was revealed and confessed to everything."

"And who was that?"

"Peter Pettigrew."

"But Black was a Death Eater! That whole family was!"

"Lord Black is not marked. Nor was Sirius. Sirius was and is my godfather. While in theory he could betray my parents, you know better than I do that as my godfather he could never betray me. Besides, my father and I are members of the Black Clan, as is Arthur Weasley for that matter. Not to mention Andromeda Tonks, none of whom I suspect you would consider accusing of being Death Eaters. According to Lord Black, I am second in line behind my Godfather to assume the title Lord Black. Obviously, being a Death Eater was not necessarily a Black thing, although a fair few were. Lord Black is



going to disown the lot of them for betraying the family, but that's neither here nor there.

"Now, as I said this is a mind scape..."

"So where am I really? What day is today?"

"You and your husband were admitted to St. Mungo's on November 14th 1981 and treated for physical injuries from your duel and for what the Healers believed was long term exposure to the Crutiatius Curse..."

"That's not possible! It was an hour! Two at the most!"

Harry nodded. "Yet your symptoms were consistent with that diagnosis. When you and your husband failed to recover, you were transferred to the long terms care ward in March of '82. You've been there in a bed next to your husband ever since."

"How long?" Alice pleaded.

"Today is December 23rd, 1989," Harry said.

"Eight years?" she replied in disbelief.

Harry nodded.

"My Neville is nine?" she asked in a small voice.

"As am I," Harry said.

"And my Neville? How is he? Where is he? Whose taking care of him?"

"Neville lives with his Gran," Harry said. "He's one of my best friends and is doing quite well, actually, although he does miss his parents. He is currently sitting beside your physical self here in St. Mungo's."



“And where are you?”

“Standing next to you.”

“You’re not really here with me?”

“This is a mindscape. What you see is a mental projection of myself. I hope it is an accurate one. Have never bothered to look at a mental mirror as it were. Am I wearing glasses?”

She nodded.

“Messy, black hair like my Dad? Eyes like my Mum?”

She nodded again.

“Interesting. ‘I’ll have to remember to tell Hermione that.’”

“Hermione?”

“My best friend,” Harry said. “My sister and I live with her and her parents. Well, actually she’s adopted but that’s another story altogether.”

“Sister?”

Harry nodded. “She’s about a year younger than me.”

“I didn’t know you had a sister.”

“Few did.”

“So that’s where Dumbledore sent you after it happened?”

Harry shook his head. “No. My sister and I were separated that night. She was left for adoption in the Muggle World and I was sent to live with my Mum’s lovely sister,” Harry said sarcastically.



“But that can’t be! Lily and James made it clear that those people should have nothing to do with you!”

“Dumbledore felt otherwise,” Harry said with a shrug. “Told everyone it was in my best interests to live where he had placed me. The Muggles put people like him in jail for a long time for less.”

“I can’t believe he would...”

“You and your husband were placed in this ward on his authority,” Harry said. “We learned that today when we looked at your records. If you must know, they make no effort to cure people here. This is the Ward for hopeless cases. Obviously, as you are here in this mindscape and seem quite sane, your case is not hopeless. Difficult, but not hopeless.”

“Why would he do that? It makes no sense.”

“Why would he ignore my parents’ Will? Why would he ignore those who knew I was not to be sent to live with my mother’s sister? As head of the Wizengamot, why did every suspected Death Eater get tried while my Godfather, who was unmarked, was the only person locked away without even being charged? We can only hazard a guess, although we believe it has something to do with a prophecy. We know what it is and it is so vague that only a fool would act upon it in any way, yet it would seem two fools did.”

“I cannot believe...”

“With Sirius behind bars and you and your husband given up for lost, every person who knew they had been named as my potential guardians in the event something happened to my parents was out of the picture. That being the case, I was truly an orphan and the ward of one Albus Dumbledore. A Muggle who treats their dog the way my aunt’s family treated me would be in jail. If Dumbledore did not know about how I was treated for almost six and a half years, he’s an idiot. If he did know, then he is no better than the man who killed my parents. Worse even. They say the Killing Curse is quick and painless...”



Alice thought to say something but clearly changed her mind. "And how did you come to get out of that situation?"

"My Aunt's husband beat me mercilessly and the lot of them left me for dead. That was about a year and a half ago. The Grangers found me or, more accurately, I passed out crossing the street right in front of their car. They got me to a hospital. While there, my sister arrived as well. Her adoptive father had died of cancer and she and her Mum were in a car crash. Her Mum died and she wound up in the same hospital as me. As we were both orphans in the Muggle world, they placed us with the Grangers. We are both quite happy there, although I'm probably more so than my Sis. Her parents, like the Grangers, were decent people."

"And your Aunt?"

"She and her family did the world a big favor and died in a house fire while I was still in hospital."

"I'm sorry."

Harry shrugged. "Not your fault, Lady Longbottom."

Alice sat there for a while thinking. She had so many questions about Harry and what had happened but finally decided now was not the time.

"Okay, so I'm in a mindscape while my body lies in a bed in St. Mungo's," she finally said. "And you are here and real, or as real as anything in this place. How? Why should I believe that?"

"You've never imagined me before, have you?"

Alice shook her head.

"And you do know of a way for one person to mentally project themselves into the mindscape of another, yes?"



She nodded, then glared at Harry. "But that's impossible! You're only nine! Very few people are even capable of Legilimency, and NONE of them are children!"

"In my brief time in this life and world, I have learned that what's true for magical Britain is not necessarily true elsewhere. Were this country not my homeland, if all of my friends lived elsewhere, and if my currently family wanted to, I'd be shot of this backwater. The Grangers know Hermione, my sister and I are magical, as are all of our friends. They want the best education for us and they found it. It's not here in Britain, but on the far side of the world. When we went back for our second year, we brought our friends with us, to include Neville.

"Occlumency and basic, permissive or passive Legilimency are required to pass the I.C.W. O.W.L.s in Mind Magic. Mind Magic is one of the required courses we take from day one at our school."

"So you're telling me you're using Legilimency and have your O.W.L.s at age nine?" Alice said in disbelief.

"I am here, aren't I?" Harry said. "Unless you want to believe you're dreaming, can you offer any other explanation?"

Alice shook her head. "Either you're telling the truth or I'm nuts."

"One of my professors once told me that when you eliminate the likely and the probable, whatever is left, however improbable must be the truth."

"It's still hard to believe," Alice said shaking her head.

"If you see time as immutable," Harry replied.

"Time compression?" Alice asked.

Harry nodded.

"But that's illegal!"



“Not where we’re going to school,” Harry said, “at least not for the school.”

“How long?”

“We attend school there for a month. We experience fifteen hundred days, or four years and forty days. Every three hundred days is a single academic year, so we get five years of education each summer.”

“How many summers have you been there?”

“Two,” Harry said.

“And how far along are you in school?”

“I’ve taken my O.W.L.s, N.E.W.T.s and have a Master’s Certification in Defense.”

“Defense?”

“Combat Magic.”

“Excuse me?”

“ Similar to Auror training, but with little emphasis on law enforcement and loads on dueling and unit tactics and such.”

“Why that?”

“I thought it was pretty cool,” Harry shrugged.

“So, you’re done with school then?” Alice asked.

“Not hardly,” Harry said. “We also attend non-magical classes. I’ve only just finished Secondary School in that track. Next summer, I return for University and to begin work on other Master’s Certificates.”



“Others?”

Harry nodded. “Did real well in Potions and like that, so that’s one. I’m currently debating between Curse Breaking and Warding – at least as far as which one I’ll start once I have my Potions Mastery.”

“Do you have a wand?”

Harry nodded. “Got it overseas at the school, although at least through O.W.L. levels, we were also expected to do everything wandless as well.”

“They teach wandless magic?”

“It’s required for top level I.C.W. exams,” Harry nodded. “Both the mind arts and wandless magic are easier for young people to learn...”

“But we were always told those were hard...”

“And they are for an adult witch or wizard,” Harry said. “And consider who told you.”

“Just about everyone.”

“Ministry propaganda,” Harry said. “If you wait until you’re seventeen to start learning, then they’re right. It’s almost impossible to learn by then. But young people do it instinctively. It’s actually easier at my age to learn that than wand movements and incantations, although I seemed to do well enough at that as well.”

“Just how old are you?” Alice asked. “I’m sorry, but I have to ask.”

“No problem,” Harry said. “Physically and magically, I am nine. Under that schools time magic, we age at normal speed even though we experience fifty days for every one normal day. By count of days experienced, however, I have experienced about seventeen and a half years.”



“So, you’re no more powerful than a nine year old?”

“Actually, I am in the top one percent it seems with regard to magical potential, so I am quite powerful for a nine year old. But, you know that magic matures slowly until puberty and much more rapidly during and after. Compared to an adult, I am still a kid. I’m just a kid with the equivalent of ten years of education and training. From a skill standpoint, I am well ahead of others my age – at least those who are not going to school with me.”

“And my Neville?”

“Neville is a summer behind Hermione Clarice and I. He took his O.W.L.s already. All outstanding, I believe. He was Honors in Herbology and had With Distinctions in Potions, Defense and maybe one other.”

“Honors? My Neville?”

Harry nodded, “He ranked twelfth in his year.”

“That’s not so great,” Alice frowned. “When I was at school that would have been top twenty percent...”

“It was in the top three percent there,” Harry said. “There were over four hundred students in his O.W.L. year.”

Alice smiled for perhaps the first time. “My Neville,” she said softly. “Can ... can I see him?”

“Soon,” Harry said. “When we are finished and assuming Hermione does not finish first...”

“Hermione? What does she have to do with seeing my son?”

“She’s trying to make contact with your husband as I have made contact with you as we speak.”



Alice nodded. "Okay, Mr. Highly Educated Boy," she said with a slightly mischievous smile, "what did happen to my husband and I?"

"Bellatrix LeStrange used a private Black family curse on you," Harry said. "Hermione found it when reading through the Black family journals."

"You have access to those?"

Harry nodded. "Lord Black has granted us access to his library."

"There's bound to be dark magic in those journals," Alice said with trepidation.

"Actually, no more so than some of the private family magic we've found in the Potter journals."

"So what did this curse do?"

"Trapped you in this mindscape," Harry replied.

"Can you get me out?"

"I'd like to say yes," Harry said. "All I can say right now is we are working on it."

He could see a tear in her eyes.

"The only recorded way to break the curse is with the caster's wand," Harry said. "If your colleagues in the Auror's followed procedure when they chucked Bellatrix in Azkaban, they snapped it."

"So there's nothing...?"

"I said we are working on it," Harry replied somewhat forcefully. "Just 'cause the Blacks never bothered to find another way does not mean there isn't one. If the spell had destroyed your mind, well we



wouldn't be talking and there would be no hope. But you and I are here, so there must be a way. As Hermione says, there's more than one way to skin a cat."

"What's that?"

"Muggle expression."

"So what now?"

"We make copious notes, visit and ask more questions maybe, research all we can here. When we return to school in July, we talk with noted experts in their fields, research in those libraries which contain magic not taught here or published for that matter. Hermione is confident if we do not stumble upon a way to get you out before then, when we return next August, we should be close."

"Until then?"

"Neville will probably visit you like this quite often. He's eager to meet his real parents and this way, while not perfect, is far better than before."

Alice nodded. "Thank you, Harry."

"Haven't done anything yet."

"Well, that's not true now, is it? You have shown me I am not alone anymore. You and the others are trying. Seems that is more than anyone else has done for us."

Harry nodded. "You're welcome. Now, with your permission, I'll take my leave and see if Neville is available."

Alice could only nod. Harry could see the tears in her eyes as he faded from her mindscape.

Alice watched the spot where the boy she had never met before had been standing. For the first time in she did not know how long, she



had at least a little hope for the future. She did not hear the new arrival until he spoke.

“Mum?”

Alice Longbottom turned and saw her son for the first time in eight years.



## CHAPTER FORTY-EIGHT: YOU SAY YOU WANT A REVOLUTION...

TUESDAY, APRIL 24th, 1990 – BLACK MANOR, U.K.

Lord Black looked up from his newspaper as a tall, balding red-haired man with glasses entered the Parlor. The meeting was expected, although earlier in the day than he had hoped. Sirius was still at work and Lord Black had hoped his grandson would be present. Young Harry was. The lad was seated in a nearby chair reading a journal. As always, Hermione and Clarice were nearby also reading.

“How are your children, Arthur?” Lord Black asked.

Given the nature of this meeting, Arthur Weasley wondered if this was a slight, but decided against it. Sirius Black might have a reputation of being a prankster, a mean spirited one at that, but Lord Black was at worst an enigma. Arthur’s few meetings with this fellow Head of an Ancient and Noble House had not given him any reason to suspect the elderly gentleman, even if he had been in Slytherin House while in school.

“Fine, My Lord Black,” Arthur replied.

“Please call me Archie or something. Only people I either don’t know or despise are to call me by that title.”

“Archie?”

“Hate my given name. Arcturus. Sweet Merlin I will never understand my grandfather’s insistence that we name our sons after stars and such. He couldn’t point out Ursa Major if those were the only stars in the sky and goodness knows there’s not one fortune teller in the family. I doubt if the old bastard knew what sign he was born under or cared for that matter. Anyway...”

“Ah yes,” Arthur said. “Four of our five youngest are in that Club of theirs,” he said indicating Harry, Hermione and Clarice.



Ginny was the youngest and the first daughter born in the main Weasley line in at least eight generations or more. Arthur described her as smart and as having a bit of a smart mouth when irritated. The girl had swiped her mother's wand about a year ago and "invented" a hex she used on one of her older brothers that still had the boys walking on eggshells if she was in a mood. She also had inherited "The Weasley Gift" for Quidditch and was a starting Chaser on the Hogwarts Junior WISE League team along with Clarice. Right now, at least, given a chance to thrash boys on the Quidditch Pitch and think about dating boys off the pitch, Ginny would choose thrashing, and Arthur hoped that would be her choice for years to come, he added with a laugh.

Ron was the youngest of six boys and not a member of the Club, not yet at any rate. About two years ago Molly had decided that the boy had to learn to read and study. All of the other children were already reading at that age, at the time Ron was seven. Molly soon learned that not only did Ron not know how to read, it seemed he could not learn, at least not the same way the others had. Ron had been a bit sullen as compared with the others, prone to fits of anger and jealousy. Molly knew this was because he knew he could not compete with his siblings and it bothered him immensely. Ron was not stupid, that much was certain. The boy could quote Quidditch statistics better than the best sports writers even at that age, was the only Weasley who enjoyed numbers at all and was a natural, if not a prodigy at chess. He was clearly intelligent.

Through their growing friendship with the Grangers, the Weasleys were introduced to a child psychologist. She was a Muggle whose husband was a wizard. From her, they learned Ron had a specific kind of learning disorder, one that due to his intelligence could be worked around. Some truly brilliant Muggles had the same problem, although in their time it went undetected. Winston Churchill, one of the truly great Prime Ministers of Muggle Britain and a brilliant writer and speaker had it. Ron had begun working with the Muggle woman about a year ago and was making real progress in Molly's opinion. His attitude was much improved and, to Molly's surprise so were his manners. (Apparently, the Muggle woman was teaching him that as well.) Depending upon Molly's opinion of that foreign school, which



she reserved until three of her older sons returned later this summer, Ron would most likely be allowed to join the Club in August.

If Ginny had shown a talent for Spell Crafting at an early age, she paled in comparison with the twins, Fred and George. Those two were First Years at Hogwarts and along with their older brother Percy who was a Third Year, had become the terrors of the school. No teacher or student was safe from a Weasley prank. Percy was the planner, the younger two were the inventors and already their pranks this year were legendary. It drove their mother to distraction, but as all three were doing extremely well in school, she really could do little more than send Howlers – about once or twice a week it seemed. Arthur thought it was brilliant, provided they adhered to his one and only rule: no pranks that would interfere with another student's study.

Arthur was a little concerned about what things might be like when those three returned from Japan. He told Lord Black that Molly was even more concerned. If half of what they had heard and seen from those who had spent even a summer there was any indication, the Weasley Pranks would exceed their already legendary level. True, Percy had said he would “retire from the field” next year, but Arthur could tell that Percy would not retire completely. The good news was that the Weasleys would not be the only kids with a summer in Japan under their belts next fall so, hopefully, the pranking would be offset by a large contingent of students who could counter it.

Charlie was in his sixth year. He was in his second as Captain of his House's Quidditch Team, had led Gryffindor to the House Cup last year – it's first Championship since James Potter was team Captain over ten years ago – and had led them to the Cup again. True, Slytherin still had to play Hufflepuff, but Gryffindor was undefeated and every other team had at least one loss as it stood. Next year would be different. Charlie was losing two Chasers and both of his Beaters. Best he could hope for was not to finish last. Charlie had taken an interest in magical creatures in general and dragons in particular, enough so that he had already turned down offers from three professional Quidditch teams.

“Finally, our oldest Bill finished Hogwarts last spring. Head Boy, you know. Now works as a Curse Breaker Apprentice for Gringotts...”



“A Head Boy who’s not at the Ministry? Surely there’s a law against that.”

Arthur laughed. “Molly believes there should be. Were it up to her the lot of them would follow me into the Ministry. I wouldn’t wish that fate upon the children of my worst enemy. Well, maybe that lot, but not my children.”

“A senior department head discouraging interest in the Ministry?” Lord Black said in mock surprise.

“I wouldn’t be the only one these days,” Arthur sighed. “I took that job because it had a steady paycheck. It was not what I wanted to do with my life, but I was young, married and Molly was expecting and I needed an income.” Arthur shrugged. “Least I don’t take myself seriously like a lot of the social climbers there. Most original idea any of them will ever have is to put mayonnaise on their fish and chips instead of vinegar. I swear that if you take that place seriously it will consume your soul just as surely as a rogue dementor.”

“And yet you’ve worked there for twenty years?” Lord Black asked.

“Twenty-one actually. Molly was expecting our first-born Bill when I started.”

“In Muggle Affairs,” Lord Black continued. “As I recall, not a popular office. Mostly staffed by Muggle Borns, except in key positions.”

Arthur nodded. “It’s one of only two offices where a Muggle Born can expect to be more than a file clerk. The other is the Muggle Worthy Excuse Committee under the Department of Magical Law Enforcement.”

“Actually,” Lord Black said, “the Department of Mysteries has a fair few Muggle Born Unspeakables, I’m told. Then again, as the identity of any person in that Department is secret... Forgive my asking, but why Muggle Affairs and later Misuse of Muggle Artifacts? Unless something’s changed there was little real chance for advancement.”



“If I was going to be a Ministry sop, I wanted to do something interesting, something outside of my previous experience. I wanted to learn something new.”

Lord Black nodded. “Unlike the average Ministry sop who is either in it for the bribe money, the power or both. And your opinion of Muggle Affairs?”

“It was not what I expected but it was a ‘safe’ job. It was just necessary enough that they could not allow a position to be vacant and undesirable enough that most everyone did not want the position. I could do what I felt was necessary and not worry about getting sacked because there really was no one available and willing to replace me. My only limitations were budgetary.”

Lord Black nodded. “Pity my governmental experience has never afforded any such sense of freedom or purpose. I know your House lost its seat on the Wizengamot some three centuries ago, Arthur, but perhaps in your case that was for the best. In the past few months we have fallen further than ever. Nothing is getting done. Before, there were three possible coalitions that would take some action, review revise or introduce some law. Now, you cannot find a coalition that can agree that the sun has been known to rise on occasion.”

Arthur nodded. “Oddly, your institutional paralysis has been a boon to my side of the building.”

“How so?” Lord Black asked. He knew the probably answer.

“Were the Wizengamot able to get a bare majority of its members to agree on anything, the recent expansion of Child Welfare probably would not have occurred. We would probably have been barred from revealing any information regarding the ‘Children of the Chambers’ as the Press has dubbed the victims of that vile policy. What we are doing violates no existing law, for the information we do release was available to anyone who might have asked before the events of last fall. If anything, we’ve imposed restraints on the information lest it be used for ill by the unscrupulous.”



“And what about what we are to do today?” Lord Black asked. He knew the answer, but wanted the Heir Apparent of the Ancient and Noble House of Weasley to articulate it.

“Again, legal,” Arthur said. “You know as well as I do there are certain exceptions for the Heads of the Ancient and Noble Houses.”

“Some pigs being more equal than others,” Lord Black nodded.

“What’s that?”

“It’s from a Muggle book.”

Arthur nodded.

“From here on, we’re under the Oath,” Lord Black said firmly.

Arthur again nodded, although it did not make total sense to him. The Oath was the one that bound the Ancient and Noble Houses to the ruling Monarch of Britain. What this had to do with the rest of Britain escaped Arthur, but it was always possible there was a connection and if there was, their loyalty to the Queen trumped whatever other oaths they may have made over time.

Arthur then looked at the three children who were with them. He had expected Lord Black to dismiss them, but that had not happened.

“Harry is the Heir Apparent and de facto Head of the Ancient and Noble House of Potter,” Lord Black explained. “He shall assume full responsibility, including that of fealty to Her Majesty upon his eleventh birthday. Clarice is his sister. The affairs of House Potter are her business. Hermione is part of their family and is one of the ‘victims’ of the ‘Chamber,’ although she is both aware of this fact and of her full heritage.”

“How is that so?” Arthur asked.



“My parents and adoptive parents knew each other,” Hermione said. “My true Great-grandmother has been a part of my life since I was born and adopted. When I learned of magic about two years ago they told me.”

“And here I thought it was your keen intellect and exceptional research skills,” Lord Black teased.

“Honestly!,” Hermione huffed.

“Anyway, Arthur, do you have the documents?” Lord Black asked.

“Copies,” Arthur nodded. “Although I do not understand why...?”

“Indeed,” Lord Black replied. Lord Black revealed he was wearing a ring. He let the others look at it. It was gold and without any adornment. Where a stone might have been seated, there was a symbol etched deep into the flat surface. It was a crude and very ancient looking crown below which were what looked like two crossed swords, although on closer inspection they were clearly wands.

“This ring is the rightful possession of the true Head of an Ancient and Noble House. It can only be passed to them or ever worn by them. Should the line of succession be broken, the ring shall vanish forever. That is the only magical thing about them. These rings were crafted in the late thirteenth century and presented to the magical Clan Heads who had sworn fealty to Richard the First both as a sign of their connection and a reminder of where their true loyalties must lay. Harry? You too have such a ring waiting for you in your family’s main vault and can claim it upon your eleventh birthday. By claiming it, however, and whether you know it or not at that time, you bind yourself to Her Majesty, her government and people as surely as if you took a magical oath.”

Arthur paled a little.

“All oaths to any magical person that conflict with your loyalty and duty to the Crown are and will be null and void. However, should you as Head of an Ancient and Noble House and of your own volition take



action in contravention of the Oath of your ancestors, you know the penalty.”

Harry nodded.

“And what’s that?” Arthur asked.

“All magic is extinguished from your line – forever.”

Arthur gasped.

“Were I to violate the oath,” Lord Black continued, “the magic in the House of Black would be gone. Not just my magic and that of my descendants, but also that of all the descendants of my father’s brothers and sisters – with two exceptions.”

“Who?” Arthur asked.

“You and Harry,” Lord Black replied. “You two are both descended from nieces of my father, but as you are both the Heir Apparent of an Ancient and Noble House in your own rights, my betrayal would not taint your House or lineage.”

“So if let’s say the Muggle Queen asked me to – oh I don’t know – lead a coups against the Ministry, I’d have to do that?” Arthur asked.

“No. Not that kind of loyalty oath,” Lord Black replied. “In fact, you cannot be compelled by Her Majesty to do anything. What it means is you cannot take any action that threatens Her Majesty, her government or her non-magical subjects. In our times, that meant being a Death Eater. Any Head of an Ancient and Noble House who became one, or who was one when he became the Head, condemned his family magic to oblivion.”

“That happened?” several voices asked.

“I can’t say with absolute certainty, but I believe it did which is why we are here.”



“And what about your own family?” Arthur asked. “Your grandfather taught generations his Pureblood Supremacist ideas and your father was at least the bigot he was. The Death Eaters quoted your grandfather’s writings on blood supremacy!”

“I make no apologies for my Grandfather or a fair few of his myopic, like minded descendants, but to paint the lot of us with the same brush? Or do you forget, Arthur, that your grandfather was my Uncle, Arcturus Black?”

“Sorry,” Arthur said.

“And Uncle Phineas...”

“Okay, I’ll grant you that. But Phineas Black the Younger was a bit off.”

“I’ll concede that once he attained his seat on the Wizengamot he was less than – er – compromising. But, he was quite sane. He was also very Slytherin, which was why he attained that seat in the first place.”

“Really?”

“Uncle Phineas never believed that Pureblood stuff his father was on about and personally believed his father was dangerous. He quietly opposed the man practically from the day he first set foot in Hogwarts at age eleven in 1891. However, he led Grandfather to believe he was the most ardent of supporters, just too shy to be public about it. Not long after Uncle Phineas finished Hogwarts, a seat on the Wizengamot opened up as the holder of that seat died without any heir. Grandfather used all of his influence to see to it that the seat was filled with a person who would advance his Pureblood agenda, rather than let it fall to a moderate or – Merlin forbid – a progressive voice promoting equality and such. Grandfather also wanted someone young so that the voice of Pureblood Supremacy would be heard for decades to come. Phineas fit the bill.



“My father would one day inherit the Black seat, so for the Blacks to hold two seats, both held by good little Pureblood Supremacists – and my father was a true believer – Grandfather saw to it that happened. In 1901, young Phineas Black took his seat on the Wizengamot and immediately began attacking his father and his father’s beliefs. For the next seventy years, anyone who advanced a Pureblood agenda would be attacked – verbally – on the floor of the Wizengamot by Phineas Black. Phineas was the self-proclaimed leader of the Progressives from his first day in Chambers. Although truth be told, he was so far to the left of the Progressives that he made them look like Traditionalists.”

“Progressives?” Hermione asked, “Traditionalists? Are those like the Labor and Conservative parties?”

“Factions, more like,” Lord Black said. “And there are factions within the factions within the factions, so those are more general descriptions. The Traditionalists are most all Pureblooded and generally believe that things should remain the same as they have always been. At the far side of that group are the Pureblood Supremacists who believe that the way things have always been or should always have been is with a Pureblood ruling elite and the rest of the wizarding world a working class beholden to the Elites. The Progressives want change and generally want greater rights for all witches and wizards – although they do not agree on what that means. In the middle, for the lack of a better description, are the Moderates. They vote with their bank vaults. They are to a member business people and will not support a law that cuts into their profits. Basically, they are the true law makers as they will oppose any bill that either threatens their work force, deprives them of skilled labor, or increases the cost of wages and production. As most of their labor force and consumers are not Purebloods (only about fifteen percent of the total population are) they generally oppose the Traditionalists. Although whenever better wages and working conditions are discussed, they oppose the Progressives.”

“And how was your Uncle so far more progressive than the Progressives?” Hermione asked.



“The list is endless,” Lord Black chuckled. “But, for brevity sake ... every year until his death he introduced a bill to disband the Wizengamot, strip Purebloods of any superior rights they might have under the law, and ban them from more than their proportional share of any jobs in the Ministry or votes in any governing body. When one considers that over half of all members of the Wizengamot and Ministry officials are purebloods and they make up less than fifteen percent of the population, well you can guess what became of those bills.”

“Not that they could replace themselves,” Arthur said, “the Wizengamot that is.”

“What do you mean?” Harry asked.

“Our right to self-rule was granted by King Richard the First,” Hermione said, “remember? I guess only the Queen could disband or change the Wizengamot.”

“Not exactly,” Lord Black said. “Our right of self rule was granted to the heads of Clans, now known as the Ancient and Noble Houses. They formed the Magical Council at that time. The Council created the Wizengamot and set up all the rules governing it, including rules for how to replace vacancies and such. Now the Magical Council has not exercised any governing authority in centuries, but under the treaty it is the ruling body of our world. The Wizengamot serves as its day-to-day proxy and the Ministry is strictly a creation of the Wizengamot which actually runs the government. Legally, the Ministry of Magic has no real authority as it was never authorized by either the Crown or the Magical Council. The Wizengamot’s authority to govern can be repealed at any time by the Magical Council.”

“Why hasn’t something like that happened?” Clarice asked. “I mean with the last War and such and our government doing nothing...”

“It requires the unanimous approval of all Heads of the Ancient and Noble Houses,” Lord Black said. “To be honest, I can’t say I know for sure who all of those are or even how many. I have reason to believe some lines have forgotten their past and others are not what they



think they are. In large measure, that's what this little meeting is about. Arthur?"

"Dumbledore's going to name names," Arthur said.

"Excuse me?" Harry asked in confusion. The other two children also did not understand.

"He's going to reveal the names of every Hogwarts student who had a child in the school's Time Chamber," Arthur said.

"Why?" Hermione asked. "I mean, I thought that situation had calmed down."

"Apparently not to Dumbledore's liking," Arthur said. "He spoke with Molly and me about it. He wants the Wizengamot to do something about that problem and they have repeatedly refused to even consider it. He thinks that by showing the true scope of the problem, the Wizengamot will put a stop to the secret children, as he calls them, and maybe even address the fundamental problems of underage pregnancy itself. He considers the fact that his school is little more than a baby factory in the eyes of the magical world an insult."

"He's the bloody Headmaster," Harry growled. "Surely he knew that all along!"

Arthur shrugged. "The fact that he is taking such action suggests he is not as all knowing and wise as he has led many to believe. Until a couple of years ago, I admit that Molly and I were big supporters of his. Then there was that abuse scandal and the situation with Sirius Black and now this. I have no idea what he is really on about, but I am glad as is Molly that five of our children will not be under his control for their educations. If we thought we could get away with it without raising suspicions, we'd pull three of them out this instant and never send Ron or Ginny to that place. But Charlie cannot be pulled and it would look odd, so..."



“I still don’t understand why any of this matters,” Hermione said. “He’s not identifying the children, is he?”

“He can’t,” Arthur said. “He’s using the school records which only identify the parents and basic information about the child. Those records do not include the child’s name or ultimate fate.”

“Fate?”

“For example,” Lord Black said, “the school records would indicate that your parents had a daughter while at Hogwarts, but not the name of that daughter nor where or with whom she was placed.”

“Oh.”

“Why does any of this matter?” Harry asked.

“Remember,” Lord Black said, “when the treaty was signed with King Richard I, there were three hundred Ancient and Noble Houses. By 1420, there were less than one hundred left. By 1817, when the Time Chambers came into use, there were only twenty left.”

“What happened to them?” Clarice asked.

“The rules regarding the inheritance of Ancient and Noble House status are very different than other forms of inheritance in our world. It is based upon the old English or more likely Norman practice of *prima genitor*. Under that practice, the title can only pass from father to oldest surviving son or the oldest surviving grandson of the oldest son and so forth. If there is no living male descendant from a strictly male line, the Ancient and Noble House is said to die off, even if there are males and females in the line. For example, if I only had daughters, even if they had sons the line would end with me.

“Because of the violence in the twelfth though fifteenth centuries that was threatening to extinguish all such lines, the surviving Ancient and Noble Houses passed a Charter that only applied to them which allowed a line threatened with termination to extend the line. The



Head of House could designate any male descended from his Grandfather as a successor, provided in so doing the designation was in writing and either identified by name every potential claimant to the title or stated under oath that there were no claimants. This slowed but did not stop the decline. As I said, by 1817, there were only twenty lines left.

“By 1970, when Voldemort began his rise, there were only sixteen left, four having ended in the interim: the Houses Dempsey, Gaunt, Mayberry and Selvin had all died out by then.”

“But you once said there are only twelve Houses today,” Clarice interrupted.

“Indeed, and therein lies the conundrum. You see, between 1970 and 1976, four of the remaining lines lost their magic.”

“So they betrayed the Queen?” Harry asked. “They became Death Eaters?”

Lord Black shrugged. “At the time, the supposed Heads of those Houses did not, nor did any of their sons. Aside from the obvious fact that scores of witches and wizards were suddenly and permanently rendered Squibs, there was no reason to believe a violation of the Oath. Everyone thought that it was some dark curse placed upon them by Voldemort as all four Houses were very active against Voldemort and his Death Eaters.

“But, at that time, none of us knew about the Time Chambers. It is more probable that at some time in the past after 1816 a son was born to all four lines in those Chambers and went unknown into the world and eventually into the magical population. That son was the true Heir to his unknown father’s legacy and if that son or a later son became a Death Eater...”

“It is also possible that one of the lines that ended or will end may not have,” Arthur added. “Lord Black asked me to look into it and I now have the results. I only looked at the known Head of each of the twenty Ancient and Noble Houses who were alive in 1817 and their



descendants, both legitimate and illegitimate. Specifically, I was looking for sons born in the Chamber to the Head of House or an Heir Apparent.”

“Not the daughters?” Hermione asked.

“I have those, but they are not important to this discussion as they cannot be the Head of House.”

“And?” Lord Black began. “Shall we begin?”

Arthur nodded. “Now, the first thing you should know is that what was reported earlier about the Chambers and Hogwarts is correct. The problem of teen pregnancy in our world rests primarily at Hogwarts. In an average year, each of the other five schools has two pregnancies. Hogwarts has at least fifty. Even then, while three of the Houses have an average of three pregnancies each year, Slytherin has the rest. It has been that way since the start. So, basically, Slytherin House is the largest producer of children and accounts for almost a quarter of all the Muggle Borns born each year.”

“So, shall we begin?” Lord Black asked.

Arthur nodded.

“The House of Abbott?” Lord Black asked.

“Clean,” Arthur said. “A couple of illegitimate daughters a few generations back, no sons.”

“Bones?”

“As you know, when Edgar Bones died in 1981, it was thought that was the end,” Arthur said. “Neither his sister Amelia nor his daughter Susan can continue the Ancient and Noble House.”

Lord Black nodded. “I sense a ‘but.’ Am I right?”



Arthur nodded. "Four generations before Edgar Bones, the then Heir Apparent had a son while at Hogwarts. That boy was adopted out to a Muggle family by the name of Wood. Each generation since has had a son. So..."

"So the Bones line does continue through this Wood family," Harry finished.

"Exactly," Arthur said. "Timothy Wood would be the current Head of House. His grandson Oliver is the Heir Apparent. Oliver's father was killed during the War. Oliver is currently my son Percy's roommate at Hogwarts."

"Also part of the October expansion to the Club," Hermione noted.

"We'll skip the Blacks for the moment," Lord Black said. "My grandfather made a mess of that one. Dempsey?"

"Line survives through an illegitimate son born in 1823. Current Head of House is Victor Sample. Heir Apparent is a seventh year at St. Albans."

"Diggory?" Lord Black asked.

"Clean line," Arthur replied.

"Fawcett?"

"Clean."

"Gaunt?"

"Well and truly dead. That family never attended schools and appears to have married brother to sister - or at least bred them - for several generations. The last of the line, one Morphin Gaunt, apparently never got in his sister's knickers and died without an heir."



“The sister wouldn’t be Marope Gaunt, would she?” Hermione asked.

Arthur nodded. “Why?”

“She gave birth to a boy named Tom Riddle,” Harry said. “The father was a Muggle. You know that boy by his nom de guerre: Voldemort.”

“Bloody hell,” both Lord Black and Arthur said.

“He was a Half Blood?” Arthur added.

Harry nodded. “We checked his ancestry records last year.”

“Why?” Lord Black asked.

“Is he really the heir of Slytherin?” Arthur added.

“Cause we were bored,” Harry replied, “and he is the legal heir of Slytherin, but not the magical heir.”

“You know who the magical heir is, I take it?” Arthur asked.

“We do. And we’ll leave it at that for now.”

“You’re no fun,” Lord Black said with a shrug as he decided to drop that matter. “Longbottom?”

“Technically, Frank is the true Head of House. Neville the Heir Apparent,” Arthur said. “Line’s clean.”

Lord Black nodded. “Lovegood?”

“Clean line. The Heir Apparent is due...?”

“Anytime now,” Clarice said. “Along with his twin sister.”



“Mayberry?” Lord Black asked.

“There was an illegitimate Heir. Current Head of that line would be Tristen Haskell. His son Nigel is Heir Apparent and his Grandson Collin is five years old.”

“So that’s two supposedly dead lines that are not?” Lord Black asked.

Arthur nodded. “The Selvin line is gone.”

“Mercer?”

“Clean.”

“Potter?”

“Clean. Harry here is truly the Heir Apparent.”

“Prewett? My son-in-law is supposed to be the Head, but has no children.”

“There is an Heir. Few generations back a boy was born to the then Heir Apparent at Hogwarts. Adopted name was Reardon. His Great-grandson and then Heir Apparent married a muggle girl from the West Indies. The Heir Apparent then disappeared. Hall of Records shows that Albert Reardon died in 1979, although there is no record of a burial. Probably killed by Death Eaters. Anyway, his wife was pregnant at the time and had a son born in January 1980. She remarried and the step-father adopted the boy. He would be ten right now. He’s magical, although living in the Muggle world - London to be exact.”

“This boy have a name?” Lord Black asked.

“His adopted name is Dean Thomas,” Arthur replied.



“We may want to look in on him before he learns of magic,” Lord Black said. “Lad probably would not find any of this out otherwise.”

“Why not?” Hermione asked.

“If he asked the goblins at Gringotts, they might tell him,” Lord Black said. “But Muggle raised witches and wizards never have asked before. The goblins would never volunteer any information about his possible inheritances.”

“Why not?”

“ ’ Cause the Goblins technically can keep any unclaimed inheritances,” Arthur said. “My son Bill says they only do so when it is clear there can be no claimants, but they don’t like to encourage claims at all.”

“You know this magical world you all have here is pretty messed up,” Hermione said in disgust.

Lord Black nodded. “For now,” he said. “One day, maybe, it can be changed for the better. That is one of the reasons we’re here today. We need to get a handle on the Ancient and Noble Houses at the very least.”

“Because if they all agree they can change everything,” Harry said. “They can do away with the current government and all that, right?”

“Revolution,” Clarice asked.

“Yes maybe,” Lord Black chuckled. “But not today or anytime real soon.”

“Why not?” Hermione asked. “We all know this current system is ... well ... silly.”

“Indeed,” Lord Black agreed. “But while the Ancient and Noble Houses have that legal authority, it’s not like they can actually do that



today. I doubt very seriously that the vast majority of Wizengamot members and Ministry officials would just step aside if we told them to. No, we have the legal authority to do it but lack the means to make those who disagree with change to accept it or step aside. One day, though. This current crisis is already undermining the public trust. A few more and a few more years of these kind of revelations and I would hate to be a Ministry official. They'd probably be stoned in Diagon Alley. When that day comes, when the people demand change and are faced with those in power who refuse, then it may be the time to act. Until then, we wait patiently and to the extent possible push things in that general direction. Of course, this assumes that the Heads of Houses agree that change is necessary. That has not happened before. Still, for an old revolutionary like me (even if all I did was talk in private) there is always hope for a better future.

"Right then, Trotter?"

"Clean," Arthur replied.

"And your line?"

"C-clean," Arthur said choking up a little.

"Mr. Weasley?" Clarice asked.

"It seems Molly and I ... we had a daughter while at Hogwarts. We never knew about her or can't remember her. She was born in 1966 near the end of our Sixth Year. Her name was Mary."

"Was?" Clarice asked catching onto something in his voice.

"She was killed in the Diagon Alley Massacre in August of 1977. Her parents were killed too. She was only eleven and it was probably her first trip into our world and she was killed by those bastards!"

"Does Molly know?" Lord Black asked.

Arthur nodded. "She's never going to forgive Dumbledore for that. She blames him for our lost little girl. She believes - and she may be



right - that had the girl stayed with us, she would still be alive today. Her brothers died doing Dumbledore's bidding. They were adults. But to lose a child? Our youngest five are going to get their education in Japan. She still wants them at Hogwarts, but she is going to 'set them loose' once they finish their first Summers."

"Set them loose?"

"Basically, she will expect them to - um - keep the pranks to a minimum in Japan and learn as much as they can. When they return to Hogwarts, however, her only rule is they cannot cause grievous bodily harm or death. Other than that, she hopes the younger ones will make the older ones' pranks look both tame and infrequent. Give the old manipulative Bastard fits is what she wants."

"I'm sorry," Lord Black said.

Arthur shrugged.

"Change of topic," Lord Black continued, "my family?"

Arthur actually chuckled. "Your family is a mess. Your Great-Grandfather had three children in the Chamber by three different girls, none of who he married. This included a son born in 1835 when your father was only fifteen. That boy grew up Muggle and joined the British Army. He was killed in the Crimea in 1856.

"Your grandfather had four children in the Chamber, none from his eventual wife, including a son. That lad also joined the British Army and was killed at the Battle of Isandlwana in 1879. He also had at least twenty-three children later on when he was a Professor."

"Including the last one? The one everyone knew about?" Lord Black asked.

"Twenty-four then."

"The one everyone knew about?" Harry asked.



“My grandfather got his last Head Girl pregnant. She was a Muggle Born and her father gunned my Grandfather down in Diagon Alley in 1925.”

“Oh.”

Arthur continued. “Your father had two sons in the Chamber, along with two daughters. Both sons volunteered for the Army in 1914. One was killed at Ypres in 1915 and the other at the Somme in 1916. None of those lads had any children.”

“So I am the Head?” Lord Black asked rhetorically. “What about my son and grandsons? What about me?”

“You’re clean. No Chamber babies. Your son had a couple of daughters while at Hogwarts. But the real problem was later.”

“Oh? Sirius?”

“Despite his reputation, Sirius did not have any children while at school,” Arthur said. “No, it seems your son did have a son before Sirius.”

“If not at Hogwarts, then where?”

“He apparently had more than a few affairs, although only one produced a problem.”

“Okay, spill.”

“He had an affair with Selma Malfoy,” Arthur began.

“The wife of Abraxas Malfoy?” Lord Black asked.

Arthur nodded.

“Don’t even tell me that Lucius is my illegitimate grandson!”



Arthur nodded. "And, unless you disown him properly and before you pass on, the next Head of the Ancient and Noble House of Black."

"Which would end the Black line then and there," Lord Black said.

"Why?" Harry asked.

"Lucius Malfoy is a Death Eater," Lord Black began.

"Worse than that," Arthur added. "He was one of Voldemort's top lieutenants when that war ended. Right nasty piece of work, that one. He managed to avoid Azkaban until about a year and a half ago when Minister Bagnold reopened all the old cases. He still got off easy. He's due to be released next year."

"If he becomes Lord Black, the line loses its magic," Lord Black said. "Guess I'll have to disown the bastard," he added with a shrug.

"If the Malfoy family finds out, they'll stick it to him as well," Arthur noted. "An illegitimate child as head of house?"

"He'll be lucky if all that happens to him is he has to get a real job to feed his smug face," Lord Black said with a feral grin. "I'll have to designate my successor, you know."

Arthur nodded.

Lord Black shrugged. "Was thinking of doing that anyway to cut the Malfoys out of any claims against the family. Just a little sooner than planned is all."

"Once you take care of that," Arthur said, "then we can say the lines are secure."

Lord Black nodded in agreement.

At that moment, a silvery rabbit entered the room. Harry, Hermione and Clarice recognized it at once. "It's time," a girl's voice sounded



from the patronus. "We're off to St. Mungo's." With that, the rabbit vanished.

"What's that?" Lord Black asked.

"It seems," Clarice replied, "that the next Heir Apparent to the House of Lovegood is about to make his entrance. I'm off to St. Mungo's," she added standing to leave.

TUESDAY, APRIL 24th, 1990 – ST. MUNGO'S, LONDON, U.K.

A small crowd was soon gathering in the Waiting Room in the maternity section of the venerable, magical Hospital. Luna Lovegood and her father were soon joined in their waiting by Harry and Hermione as Clarice was off attending to Jasmine whom they assumed was about to have her twins. They were soon joined by Lord Black and Arthur Weasley.

Molly Weasley soon arrived with her two youngest in tow and a basket filled with snacks. She took one look at the other children present and began fussing about their need to eat. The two youngest Weasley children rolled their eyes at their mothers obsession with weight.

"I swear," Ginny said to the others, "we'd have to be wider than we are tall before she thought we were overfed!"

"No worries," the red haired boy with her said, "just let me eat it all and say you had your fill!"

"That boy's got a bottomless stomach," Ginny said.

Harry looked over and saw the boy he had not seen in almost two years. The last time, the boy had been annoying - and being teased mercilessly by his siblings. Now, while Ron Weasley was stuffing his face, he was also buried in a book.

"What's he reading," Harry asked Ginny.



“Who knows,” she shrugged. “Once he learned how, he never stops except to fly his broom or play chess. He’s got books on chess and Quidditch and castles for some reason...”

“’ Cause they’re cool,” Ron said.

Ginny shrugged and walked off in search of her father.

“So,” a new voice said, “here’s the crowd!”

Harry saw that Sirius and Sophie had joined them.

“Few month’s it’ll be your turn,” Lord Black quipped.

Sirius nodded and Sophie smiled.

“August,” Sophie said. “And it better be ‘cause I want the lot of you there.”

“Know what it is?” Xeno Lovegood asked trying to get his mind off his wife in the delivery room.

“A girl,” Sophie said.

“Congratulations,” Xeno replied. “I happen to like girls. Well, Luna and Jasmine and the girl to be named in a moment...” he added with a laugh.

“You haven’t picked a name?”

“We can’t decide. Jasmine left it to me. She says she’ll probably be too tired to deal with it when all is said and done.”

The Grangers arrived soon after.

“My dear Xeno,” Rose said, “what are you doing here?”

“Excuse me?”



“Rose,” Sophie said, “this is the magical world. We’re a little behind the Muggles in some things.” “What are you talking about?” Xeno asked.

“In the Muggle hospitals, the father is usually in the delivery room with the mother when the child is born,” Sophie said.

“Taking embarrassing photos for later use,” Robert Granger said. “Had we not adopted our daughter, I would have loads of pictures of her first few moments.”

“Daddy!” Hermione exclaimed turning red. “Honestly!”

“You have pictures of her first several baths and several nappie changes,” Rose said.

“Mum!” Hermione said in horror turning redder, if that was possible.

“Guess it’s a good thing we came along a lot later,” Harry said.

“What is this? National Embarrass Hermione Day?” Hermione moaned. “And for your information, Harry, we still have that photo of you coming out of the shower!”

“I thought you two said there was no film in the camera!” Harry shot back.

“Maybe,” Hermione said with a smirk.

“Hey guys,” a new voice called. Neville and his Gran had arrived. “Just been to see the folks,” he said. “They offer their congratulations, by the way,” he added to Luna and Xeno.

“Thanks,” the two Lovegoods replied.



Then Xeno gasped. This caught the others' attention and they all followed his gaze. Clarice and another Healer were coming towards them with a bundle in each of their arms.

"Mr. Lovegood?" Clarice asked.

He nodded.

"Your wife is doing fine. She's resting now. Would you like to meet the new ones?"

"She's okay?" Xeno Lovegood asked.

"She's perfect, as are these two."

"Wow. Er ... who's who?"

"This is your new daughter," Clarice said handing the bundle to Mr. Lovegood. "She was first out and is a bit bigger than your son. Healer Tonks has him."

"Luna?" Xeno asked, "would you like to hold your brother?"

Luna nodded and was told how to hold the boy as she was handed the small bundle.

"He's so tiny," she said.

"They tend to be," Clarice replied. "Now, we need to complete the paperwork. Jasmine asked me to ask you for their names, Mr. Lovegood."

Xeno nodded. "We talked about it, but could not really decide. Now that I see them, I know. One of our ideas was to name them after those who made their lives possible by saving my wife and daughter. My son will be Harry Theodore Neville and my new daughter will be Hermione Sophia Clarice after the people who rescued my wife and took care of her following her accident."



“I’m honored, Mr. Lovegood,” Clarice said after a long silence.

The others agreed.

“Harry?” Xeno asked.

“Y-yes Sir?” Harry replied.

“Jasmine and I would like it very much if you agreed to be the Godfather for our daughter. I know you’re a bit young, but...”

“It’s a great Honor, Harry,” Lord Black said.

“I’d like that,” Harry finally said.

“We’d like Neville to be our son’s Godfather,” Xeno continued, “with Clarice as our daughter’s Godmother and Hermione as our Son’s.”

“We’d be honored,” Hermione said looking at her parents who were beaming at their children.

“Does this mean they have to change nappies,” Robert Granger quipped.

“Up to them,” Sirius said. “I can say without a doubt that I never considered nappie changing as part of my job description as Harry’s Godfather...”

“But it will be for this little one,” Sophie said.

The expression on the face of Sirius Black at his wife’s comment caused the rest to laugh at his obvious discomfort.



## CHAPTER FORTY-NINE: THE REAL BRITISH INVASION

WEDNESDAY, MAY 9th, 1990 – OFFICE W, LONDON, U.K.

Roger Grant continued to look over the highly classified file before him as he sat in the conference room near his office. Like most of the rooms in Thames House, home of State Security (also known as MI-5), the government had spared no expense to ensure that no form of eavesdropping was possible. Because this was Office W, the precautions included magical wards that prevented any form of magical surveillance. Certain things could not be left to chance.

The door opened and four men entered. Mike Evans and David Greengrass, of course, had been both partners and highly successful agents for years. Remus Lupin had been heading up the investigation into Fenir Grayback, the most notorious Were in Britain if not all of Europe. The mutt seemed to be out of the country, but Remus had been active in any event. Roger was all but certain that the British Were's would not give the mutt a warm welcome if he ever decided to return. Sirius Black was the newest Agent. In his day he had been a highly regarded Auror for the magicals who had rewarded his service with six years in prison without trial. Obviously, there was no love lost between the highly connected Black and his former government. In his short time with Office W, Agent Black was already making a name for himself.

“Good morning, gentlemen,” Roger said as the four took their seats. “Read this morning’s paper?”

“Which one?” Mike Evans asked. It was almost a rhetorical question.

“Magical Pravda,” Roger answered.

The four nodded. They knew he meant The Daily Prophet.

“What I found of interest,” Roger continued, “was a small article on page 16. Something about Lord Black disowning a distant relation.”

“Lucius Malfoy,” Sirius said. “Illegitimate son of my father, it seems.”



“Why was it necessary for Lord Black to disown a bastard?” Roger asked. “As I understand it, under Magical Law, Malfoy has no viable claim against the Black Estates by his own right. His wife may, as may his son, but not him.”

“In most cases,” Sirius agreed. “Grandfather was concerned, however, that Magical Law would not extend to the passing of the Oath – Lucius as my father’s oldest son could still become the Head of the Ancient and Noble House which is bound to support Her Majesty upon pain of the entire family losing its magic should a Head betray the oath. As Lucius is a known Death Eater, it was a risk Lord Black was not willing to take.”

“Gentlemen, what follows is Most Secret Smuggler,” Roger said. “Mike, would you care to give us a run down on Agent Smuggler?”

Mike Evans nodded and opened a file folder. “Gentleman,” he began, “I must emphasize that the information we will be discussing does not exist.”

The others nodded.

“Agent Smuggler, Wizard, born May 25th 1955 in a magical home most likely in the Lake District. Recruited by Office W in 1971 at age 16. Became a Death Eater on our orders a few months later. Thirty-eight confirmed kills of targets of interest...”

“Targets of interest? Death Eaters?” Sirius asked.

“Muggles,” Mike said. “Warsaw Pact spies and agents, certain criminals, foreign terrorists, IRA and so on. Mostly overseas, but not always.”

“An assassin?” Remus asked.

“Basically,” Mike replied. “Used his Death Eater status and your War as a cover. Deaths unexplained in our world – usual rubbish about gas explosions and such. But the kills saw him rise rapidly within the



Death Eater organization making him a very useful spy as well. Become one of Voldemort's top lieutenants by the end. In addition to our targets, he is also responsible for most of our successful attacks on his own colleagues. Some eighty-two Death Eaters were killed based upon the information he passed to us during your War."

"So this Agent Smuggler was a spy?" Sirius asked.

"Technically still is," Mike replied. "He also has some very interesting connections within the Magical government and had a talent for bribery and extortion – talents we did use on occasion."

"And this Agent Smuggler and Lucius Malfoy are one and the same?" Sirius asked.

Roger Grant nodded. He noticed the shocked look on Sirius Black's face. "Don't get me wrong, Black. The man is a right nasty bastard any way you look at it. But he happens to be our right nasty bastard."

"The unfortunate truth," Mike continued, "one which your Ministry never truly grasped – probably 'cause that Dumbledore chappie has no stomach for the reality – there are some games you must play for keeps. Malfoy was very good at quietly eliminating problems that needed elimination. While we generally refrain from such measures, the bottom line is better a dead mutt than a busload of children blown to bits by the mutt's bomb."

"To be honest," Roger Grant continued, "believe it or not, there are people in this world who make that Malfoy chap look like a choirboy."

"And you can control him?" Sirius asked.

"To an extent," Roger said. "An agent such as him is in it not for Queen and Country but some other reason, so they are never truly trustworthy. Some go rogue and become a liability. The rules of this game are that rogue agents are dealt with – permanently."

"Still..."



“The morality is simple, Black,” Roger said. “There are times when the elimination of a threat is more important than the niceties. Better a handful of dead mutts than thousands of dead subjects. When the call is made, and such call is way above my pay level, those are the factors considered. How many innocents will die if we do not take action. How many innocents did your Ministry allow to die in your last War?”

Sirius shrugged. To be honest, as far as he knew no one had ever figured that out.

“The population of Wizarding Britain in 1970 was 86,424 as of the Ministry’s official census,” David Greengrass said. “There was supposed to be one in 1980, but apparently they could not find any volunteers to go out and count. They managed to conduct one in 1985. That census showed a population of 67,923.”

“That’s almost 20,000!”

“About 18,500,” Greengrass said. “True, there were thousands who emigrated to other countries to avoid the fun. But our estimates are that the Death Eaters killed between three and five thousand magicals. That needs to be put into perspective. Despite their anti-Muggle rhetoric, the Death Eaters killed almost five times as many magicals as Muggles.”

“So which option would you prefer?” Roger asked. “Perhaps if the magical government had done its job and taken the threat seriously, thousands would be alive today. In our experience fatal cases of nine millimeter lead poisoning tends to make the other side think twice – assuming they are not totally nuts. And if they are, well the maggots need to eat too. Better them than our people.”

Sirius nodded. He was unaware of the true cost of that war. What he knew was what most knew. People were gone. But there had been no numbers. Thousands had died or fled because the government that was supposed to protect them did not. Sirius knew that it wasn’t until late 1980 that any Auror had been authorized to use lethal force even in self defense. Prior to then, the orders were to capture or



retreat. He knew why, although that did not make things any better. Many of the Death Eaters were from old or wealthy families, all well connected. More than a few government officials lived off their largess and they had been reluctant to kill the golden goose as it were, even one that was killing them for sport.

“So why are we here?” he asked.

“What effect will your Grandfather’s actions have on Mr. Malfoy?” Roger asked.

“From a practical standpoint, very little,” Sirius answered. “It cuts him off from becoming the Head of the Ancient and Noble House, but that is a title without attendant wealth or known power. Respect? For certain. But it’s not as if Malfoy knew he was in line for it or that anyone else was aware either. Our law does not bestow property rights on bastards, so even had he not been disowned, he would have no claim as to the Black Estate. His son might through the mother. He would not. The action does cut the son out.

“Even then, it only cuts them out from the Main Line. Draco – that’s the kid - is not descended from my Grandfather. His only ability to claim any right of inheritance would arise if I passed away without having a child (something I might add will be remedied come August). Even in that event, his claim would be one of several, each getting an equal cut. His mother would have a cut, as would his Aunt Andromeda and Cousin Dora. My godchildren Harry and Clarice would have an equal cut, as would the Weasley Clan. There are at least thirty claimants who’d cut up that pie.

“Moreover, the act has no impact on his wife and son’s claims on the Pollux Black properties (that Black is my maternal grandfather who has not done the world the favor of snuffing it). That includes, among other things, “Malfoy Manor” which was part of the dowry. Unless Pollux reciprocates and disowns the lot of them, their wealth attributable to the Black family is unfettered.”

“Will he?”



“Pollux? The old bastard thought Voldemort was the savior of the wizarding culture and Death Eaters like Malfoy crusaders for what was right. I doubt he’s changed his views on things. Besides, the worst he could do without losing his position in society is disown the male Malfoys. He has no cause to disown his granddaughter, at least none that I am aware of and I am not aware of a situation where the blood family member was disowned because she entered into a marriage contract under fraudulent pretenses, which is the most we have here assuming Abraxas Malfoy knew his supposed son was a bastard. That’s debatable as by all accounts Abraxas got drunk on his wedding night in 1953 and stayed that way until his death in 1963.”

“Is he joking?” Roger asked Remus.

“Not by much. Abraxas Malfoy was a very rich drunk. He was declared incompetent not long after he was married and his wife managed the family estate.”

“So this disowning thing is much ado about nothing?”

“Not necessarily,” Sirius said. “True, while Lucius is in prison, I doubt anything will come of it.”

“Why not? Seems like a perfect time to gang up on the sod,” Roger said.

“Which is why there is a law that prevents that. So long as he is alive and in prison, his estate is managed for him and cannot be subjected to legal challenge on familial grounds. Once he gets out? Well as I said, I doubt Pollux Black will take action.”

“What about the Malfoys?” David Greengrass asked.

“What about them?” Roger added.

“Ah yes,” Sirius said. “Abraxas was on the outs with his French cousins when he conveniently became incompetent. They might try



something if it appears that Lucius is both vulnerable (based upon birth status) and on the outs with his British allies.”

“Something we want to avoid,” Roger said.

“Why?” Sirius asked.

“He’s an asset. We try and protect them – within reason. We keep the vultures at bay and that’s leverage we can use to keep him under control.”

“I assume you had leverage before.”

Roger nodded. “But it’s always a good idea to have more...”

SUNDAY, JUNE 24th, 1990 – CAMP W, U.K.

It was the final meeting of The Club before the bulk of them were scheduled to head to Japan to attend the Watanabe School. All the magical schools in Britain had let out and that meant that for the first time since the expanded Club first met, everyone was present. But, moreover, this evening it was not just the Club Members. Their families were there as well. A large dinner was planned both as a send off for the 457 kids and over 50 adults (Minders) who would leave for Japan in four days, as well as an end of year feast of sorts where, among other things, the W.I.S.E. League Trophies would be awarded.

Minerva could swear she had never seen so many magical people in one place at one time. True, despite being a huge fan of the game, she had never attended the Quidditch World Cup which routinely drew a hundred thousand or more. The Club had 718 Members the past year and with their families plus others there were close to twice that many in attendance. 718 “students” unofficially made The Club the largest school of magic in the British Isles by about fifty.

Minerva knew that a lot of thought had gone into the seating arrangements. There were over one hundred tables in the large hall, each sat about fourteen people. Families sat together, but each table



had at least two and usually more than two families, always from different schools. There was no Head Table whatsoever. Minerva sat at a table with three families, none of whom were affiliated with Hogwarts – she was the Hogwarts person at her table. Like her, the other five “faculty advisors” sat with families from other schools. Even what she considered the inner circle of Members (or as the Weasley Twins had dubbed them, The High Command) received no special treatment. The Grangers sat with their kids and two other families. Remus, Sirius and Sophie actually sat at a different table with Lord Black and two other families neither of whom were named Greengrass or Evans, who sat at separate tables. Minerva had been told the whole idea was to continue the “integration” that the students had been a part of all year – to encourage the families to get to know other magical families from other parts of the country. Muggles mixed with magicals, Irish with English and so on.

She looked around when she was not engaged in conversation, which surprisingly was not often. Off in the distance she saw the amusing bane of her existence as Deputy Headmistress and Head of Gryffindor House, the Weasleys. Percy and the twins, in her estimation, had finally surpassed the infamous Marauders in scale and creativity of pranks.

She still did not know how they did it, but their “Grand Finale” for the year, just before exams, had been the first school prank she could remember that made the front page of the various Wizarding Dailies. One morning, the school woke up to find that the entire castle and all of the associated grounds were pink. The Weasleys never admitted to the prank, but there was no need. Everyone knew it was them. Still, because no one saw them do it nor could figure out how it was done, they had avoided any official punishment. Minerva had heard that they had eventually told Filius Flitwich, the Charms Professor, that it was indeed a specially made charm, for which they were quietly awarded points and given extra credit on their end of term Charms exams. The Pink Castle had driven Dumbledore spare as he felt it was a slight on the whole baby issue, which he refused to drop.

It was only today that the three Weasley boys admitted their culpability to her, stating that they had never intended the prank to be related in any way to the ongoing baby scandal. It was just that pink



was apparently the easiest color. One of the twins admitted they had also wanted to make the castle fuzzy, but had not figured that bit out in time. There was always next year. The thought of the Weasley boys with a summer in Japan under their belts almost made Minerva shudder. Fortunately, the effects wore off after a couple of days. After all, they said, it's not a prank if it's permanent.

Minerva spied Oliver Wood and his family which got her thinking about Quidditch (although friends would say that there were times when anything would get her thinking about that.) Wood had been the reserve keeper for her Gryffindor Team this past year and would most likely be the starting Keeper next year as Angus Delaney, the four year Keeper, had just completed his Seventh Year. Wood would be one of only three players returning, and he was not a starter. Poor Charlie Weasley had only one other returning starter, Alice Cochrane, the Lead Chaser. In addition to Wood, he needed two more Chasers and two Beaters.

The thing was Minerva knew where he'd probably find them thanks to the W.I.S.E. League. The Weasley twins, Alicia Spinnet and Angelina Johnson (all having just finished First Year) were all on the Hogwarts Team. WISE League was very different. The teams had "Lines" or some form of rolling substitutions at all positions except Keeper and Seeker (where there were reserves in case of injury only). The whole line of Beaters and Chasers changed out about every fifteen minutes during the time limited two hour match, which meant the pace of play was frantic as the players were almost always fresh. It also meant far more kids got to play in each match, a perfect way to evaluate potential talent.

The Hogwarts Senior team had just missed the finals. Their one weak point was at Seeker and, while under the modified League Rules, Seekers were less important than in Standard Quidditch (due to the two hour time limit), they could still be the difference between victory and defeat, which was what happened the final game of the regular season against St. Alban's, whose Seeker caught the snitch in the 91st Minute ending what had been a tightly played game. St. Alban's had already been eliminated from contention and played the role of spoiler sending St. George's to face St. Patrick's in the Finals instead of Hogwarts. (The English won.)



In the Junior League, Hogwarts had entered the Finals undefeated, but lost by ten points to St. Andrews. That team did something that while not unheard of and perfectly legal, had not been seen all year. Their Beaters “ganged up” on the Hogwarts Keeper making it both difficult for him to guard the hoops and prevent goals and keeping the Hogwarts Beaters pinned back to try and protect him. The St. Andrews Keeper had a brilliant game and the result was a near runaway in scoring. Only Harry Potter’s catching of the Snitch in the 115th minute prevented what would have been a devastating defeat. All agreed that St. Andrew’s unexpected tactics had all but taken the rest of the Hogwarts team out of the game. It was a pity, because including Harry there was talent on that squad. At least five of the Chasers could easily play for their House Teams one day including Clarice Jameson and Ginny Weasley. That Theo Nott was a good keeper by any standard, but it is hard to defend the goal when under constant attack from iron clad bludgers.

The W.I.S.E. League had been a huge success. Even the Quidditch purists liked the fast paced play even if the mandatory time limit and liberal substitution rules violated what they saw as the purity of the game. None of them would opt for those rule changes in the Professional ranks, but they had come to appreciate them at this level. The odd effect was with the Muggle parents from the various schools (as they could attend their children’s school matches). Somehow, the rule changes made the game easier to understand. Those parents were among the biggest fans, especially if one of their kids was playing. At the end of the season before the finals Harry (the “Unofficial” League Chairman) asked The Club members to vote whether to continue with the new rules next year, as those rules were originally in effect to endure they could complete the season in fifteen weeks with two leagues. There would be more than enough time next year. Overwhelmingly, the new rules were retained.

As the Hogwarts advisor, Minerva was technically in charge of all kids who were part of the Hogwarts community although her primary responsibility was for the ones actually at Hogwarts. In this vein, she tried to follow the progress of the fifty kids who were not yet at Hogwarts, a feat easier said than done. Still, she was pleased with what she saw. They all had learned a lot and she was still surprised



at how quickly the younger kids picked up magic. Seven of her charges had already been to Japan. Four had finished their first year, three of whom were nine or ten and would not begin Hogwarts until 1991. Those three had returned with the assignment to try and attain their Common Form Animagus by the time they returned to Japan.

In Britain, Animagus was a rare talent, mostly because those who developed it were self taught. It was not taught in the schools. Consequently, any Animagus form was considered a worthy accomplishment. Apparently, in those countries where the talent was far more common place (because it was taught), some forms were better than others. The ideal Common Form was an animal that would largely pass unnoticed. Large animals were not preferred nor were any animals that one either expected in a paddock or would attract the attention of a hunter. Oddly, that meant that of the three unregistered Animagi she knew, two had forms that were not considered ideal. Large black dogs attracted attention – actually any dog would, particularly in any place that had a leash law. Stags were also a little too obvious. The Common Form was for stealth and evasion, not looking cool. Thus Sirius Black and the late James Potter's forms were not ideal. Cats were generally okay. So were birds and other small animals, particularly those that were difficult prey species assuming one was not a predator.

Harry, she knew, was an eagle. She thought it might be a little too noticeable until Harry pointed out that most people do not notice them unless they are close to the ground. Clarice was a raven, a bird only the fanciers took uncommon interest in. Hermione was like her Great-grandmother, a common house cat.

Over the past couple of months, three of her four other Japan students had achieved their forms. Dora Tonks was a metamorphagus, a useful skill that she was getting special instruction on at school so she could change into just about anyone at will, but a skill that prevented her from attaining an animagus form. Neville Longbottom, it turned out, was a grey squirrel. Native to North America, they had become common enough in Britain and were considered a good form because most people took little note of them unless they were raiding bird feeders. Susan Bones was a badger, oddly enough the symbol of Hufflepuff House which had been the



House Bones family members had been sorted into for centuries. Luna Lovegood was an owl. From a Muggle perspective it was not an ideal form, at least during daylight. But as wizards used them to deliver the post, most would take no notice of an owl at any time.

Minerva was musing on the potential menagerie that might be attending Hogwarts in the next year or so when she watched Harry, Hermione and Clarice walk to a podium at the front of the room. They were to deliver some remarks and then award the W.I.S.E. Cups and some other things. Minerva really did not pay attention as she was lost in thought concerning these three children who more than any others were truly under her care as their Magical Guardian.

These three were the defacto leaders of this entire group. At eight through ten years of age, some 715 kids were in their Club. No one seemed to question this. Then again, the three already had ten years worth of magical schooling, more than any other member of the club and most of the adult witches and wizards as well. As Deputy Headmistress, she was responsible for a little over 400 students. These three had over seven hundred this year and the projections were that come September, that number would be more than double the size of Hogwarts. While certain issues were handled by the adults be they the school faculty advisors or the Office W people who handled the money and facilities, these three were at least aware of if not involved in any decision regarding The Club.

The most recent was the logistics of getting nearly 500 people to Japan. Only fourteen could Shift. The rest had to go either by Portkey or air. Portkeys were not preferred as those would require contact with the Ministry of Magic which regulated international Portkeys. Keeping out of sight from the Ministry was the current goal as no one doubted the Ministry would not look kindly on the type of education these children would be receiving overseas. But, trying to book flights for 500 people was no simple task. Office W figured best case it would take at least three days to transport all of those people and probably closer to five. It was decided to charter two British Airways 747s for the "Lift." This would allow them all to arrive in Tokyo within an hour of each other and, it turned out, was actually less expensive. Thus, on June 28th, two 747's (flown by Muggle Borns in the employ of British Airways, it turned out) would ferry the entire lot from London



to Tokyo where they would use the portal to get to the Watanabe School in Kyoto. Not surprisingly, when this had been announced to the kids who would be going, the Weasley twins had dubbed the coming summer as “The British Invasion,” which had stuck.

Minerva and all the other five faculty sponsors would be going as well to serve a stint as Minders. This would also give them time to plan for the upcoming academic year. Security the past year had been remarkably easy. Then again, there were only a handful of “overly educated” students. Dora Tonks was the only one at Hogwarts and she was good at keeping a low profile. There had only been two at St. George’s as the three oldest were now with Office W and the youngest would “start” school in the fall. This fall would be different of course. Hogwarts would have fifty-four students who had been to Japan. The other five schools would have around seventy-eight each on average. In other words, more than one out of every ten students in British magical schools would have spent at least one summer (five academic years) in Japan. This would make keeping The Program a secret far more difficult.

There had been a lengthy meeting on future security in late May. Everyone was concerned about potential Ministry interference at too early a stage. It was agreed that at some point it would be too late for the Ministry to step in successfully. After all, Harry had pointed out, even if they fully mobilized their Aurors, seventy Aurors against hundreds of Defense Masters, even given disparities in magical power, would not be a fair contest. (The Auror’s would lose most likely.) But those numbers would not be achieved until the fall of ’91 at the earliest and even then it was not fair to expect all qualified Defense Masters to stand up to the Ministry. Then again, there were more than a few disgruntled Ministry officials whose children were in the Program, to include the heads of Magical Child Welfare and Magical Law Enforcement.

Next year was when they would be most vulnerable. After that Ministry interference would be a political disaster without a doubt. Hermione had opined that even if the Ministry tried to put a stop to it next year, with over 700 in the program right now and over 900 projected for next year, interference would make the current scandals seem tame. After all, the Editors of three major magical papers also



had children in the Program. It was a pity the Daily Prophet was not one of them. Still, there was the expression one did not tickle a sleeping dragon. In a couple of years, the dragon could well be the Program. Next year, however, the Ministry would still have the edge.

The option of the children not returning to school, while both attractive and practical, was not a realistic option yet. It was true that none really needed to attend. But for hundreds of children to either stop attending school or decline outright? That would get the Ministry's attention even faster than a group of kids who seemed way too advanced for their supposed years.

With regards to Hogwarts, Minerva had thought long and hard about the risks and exactly who might be a problem for her Club members. She divided the faculty into three categories: those who would support the idea, those who would oppose (and invite Ministry interference) and those who either would not notice or care one way or another. In the support category were professors who, like her, felt there was too much restriction on what they could teach. This included three of the four Heads of House as well as the professors who taught Ancient Runes and Arithmancy and maybe the Astronomy professor. The school Matron, who did not teach, would be included as the Japanese school did teach human physiology to all students, thus potentially reducing the need for the Time Chamber.

In the oppose category there were two, maybe three names. The most critical was Dumbledore. Despite his progressive stance on many topics, education was not one of them. She had come to learn that many of the restrictions on education passed in the last half century had his fingerprints on them as his contribution to making sure there could never be another Voldemort. Moreover, something told her that if he knew that Harry Potter was well educated he might have an issue with that. While his obsession with the boy seemed to have diminished since Harry's changed family circumstances, it had only really died down as Dumbledore struggled with the Baby scandal. She knew that it was only a matter of time before the man resumed his unnatural interest in the boy, even if he still could not remember Harry for but a moment or less. She still could not believe the man wanted the boy to die. It was essential that the manipulative old man be kept out of Harry's life for at least another year. When Harry finally



had to show up at Hogwarts, she knew there would be little chance Dumbledore could ever get his sick plans back on track.

Severus Snape was also on the “Opposed” list. The Potions professor was too full of himself and Slytherin to be otherwise. He would not quietly sit by as students from other houses made his more dimwitted charges look as incompetent as they really were. True, there were good students in Slytherin. The top ones third year and below were mostly in the Program already. But those students aside, Slytherin only avoided being dead last academically because Snape always favored them.

Rubeus Hagrid was the third name. The Ground Keeper was one of the kindest people she knew and ordinarily would be in the Support side of her ledger. But his loyalty to Dumbledore was blind. If Dumbledore was opposed, so was Rubeus. Then again, of the three Rubeus probably would not say a word unless Dumbledore asked him.

The goal for next year was to keep Dumbledore and Snape in the dark about what was really going on. Hopefully, there would be just enough outside problems to keep Dumbledore distracted. Snape was too arrogant to pick up on something like this easily. As long as the Program kids promised to blow up a potion every so often, he might not catch on.

As the W.I.S.E. Cups were awarded Minerva frowned. Next year was the most critical.

FRIDAY, JUNE 29th, 1990 – THE WATANABE SCHOOL OF MAGICAL STUDIES, KYOTO, JAPAN.

Ten young people stood just inside The Red Gate, the portal entrance to the Watanabe School for Magical Studies. They were all British and all had spent at least one summer here. Unlike the last year, this group had not arrived in Japan by airplane, rather they had shifted directly from Britain. Harry had dubbed them the Lead Element and they had arrived on Wednesday to make sure everything was ready for what was now the Real British Invasion. Harry and two of the others were off in the partially completed



dormitory nearby making sure the lower floors were ready for their occupants.

The British Dorm, as they called it, would one day be a sixteen story building. As things now stood, seven of the floors were complete and three more were in various stages of construction beneath four building cranes that one would swear was a ubiquitous component of the skyline of any major Japanese city. Construction had halted for the next month so that the lower floors could house its occupants safely.

The building was shaped like a “V”, with two wings radiating out from a central tower. Each wing was a dormitory with flats for up to fifty students and four Minders on each floor of each wing. At the center of the floor of each wing were large recreation rooms, a dining hall and the library and study hall for that wing’s occupants as well as the wing’s bank of elevators. The Central Tower contained another bank of elevators as well as small meeting rooms and offices for use by students and Minders during their stay. The Ground Floor was mainly dedicated to large meeting rooms and the huge, common dining facility.

The Lead Element would be rooming in their old dormitories with many of the same young people they had lived with before. The British Dorm was for the large number of students and minders who would be arriving soon. The ten who awaited their arrive were to get them organized, make sure everyone made it to Japan, see them to the Dorm and then show them around the school grounds. In charge of the “Welcoming Committee” was Hermione, with Jason Evans and Dora Tonks as her primary assistants. They stood there waiting and chatting and looking to anyone who might be passing by as another group of students getting together before the start of the new Summer.

“Hey Hermione!” a voice called out. Hermione looked towards the portal and saw her New Zealand cousins stepping through. It was Erin McGonagall who had called her out. “How was your year?” she asked.



“Busy. I did write.” Hermione said as she was hugged by the cousins she never knew she had until two summers ago.

“What are you standing ‘round here for?” her other cousin Lyle Donovan asked. “I mean, well, you already set up in the dorms?”

Hermione nodded. “We got here a couple days ago. We’re waiting for our country’s new students.”

“More Brits?” Steve McGonagall asked.

“English, Scots, Welsh and Irish,” Hermione said. “But yeah, all from the British Isles.”

“How many?”

“Oh, a few.”

“Where’s Harry and Clarice?” Stacy Donovan asked.

“They’re off making sure everything’s set for this year’s Firsties,” Hermione replied.

“And Aunt Minnie?” Erin asked.

“She’s flying in with the new kids,” Hermione said.

“Takes ten of you to get them strait?” Steven McGonagall teased. “A thicker lot than last year?”

“A few more than last year,” Hermione said with a smirk. If the flights arrived on time, the hoard should begin pouring through the gate at any moment. Hermione could not wait to see the expressions on her cousins’ faces. It was a small, harmless prank, but a prank none the less.

“Here they come,” Luna said softly.



Hermione nodded. "Neville?" she asked.

"Right you are," Neville said firmly but with a smile and he stepped away from the small group. "RIGHT YOU LOT! SIX LINES AND BE QUICK ABOUT IT! HOGWARTS, PRESTON ACADEMY, ST. ALBAN'S, ST. ANDREW'S, ST. GEORGE'S AND ST. PATRICK'S. LET'S QUEUE UP PEOPLE! MINDERS OFF TO THE SIDE!"

The cousins turned and watched what seemed like an endless stream of people, mostly youngsters, emerge from the portal and organize into the six lines. Erin was the last to lose count somewhere around a hundred and twenty-five as there seemed to be no end to the crowd coming through.

"A few more?" Stacey Donovan asked.

"Four hundred and forty-four to be exact," Hermione said with a smirk, "and fifty adults."

"They're any children left in Britain?" Steven asked.

"Some," Hermione said.

"Bloody hell!" Lyle exclaimed. "Why so many?"

"Let's just say a fair few families throughout our country are less than satisfied with the quality of education there," Hermione said.

"They all can afford this?"

"Her Majesty's government is less than thrilled with the education her magical subjects have been receiving as well," Hermione added with a smirk.

"You mean the non-magical government?" Erin asked.

Hermione nodded.



“What about your Ministry?”

“Officially, they don’t know a thing about this, although at least a few of them have kids in that crowd, or already here.”

“It’s a bloody invasion,” Steven said as the crowd continued to enter the grounds.

“So what’s this stuff about Time Chambers we’ve been reading about,” Stacy asked...

Luna had been assigned the task of getting the Minders organized and set up in the dorms. With her was Amber Evans, although they were basically moving amongst the adults, magical and Muggles alike and making sure everybody was there with all their luggage. Minerva was helping as was Rose Granger who had returned for another summer. One person in the group came as a total surprise.

“Daddy?” she asked.

“Hey, snowflake,” Xeno Lovegood said. “So this is Japan?”

Luna nodded.

“It’s even more stunning a vista than your descriptions,” Xeno said. “So peaceful. That painting on your ceiling barely hints at this!”

“It’s nice here,” Luna agreed. “But why are you here? What about Mum and the babies?”

“You’re Mum and all are fine. They’re visiting your Gran for the month although Mum will be here for your graduation. As for me, well this is the time of year I reserve for safari. Even when you were but a babe, I still went. Mum understands. Especially now. We both wanted to know what this wonderful place was like and so I signed up as a Minder for the new kids. Mum would have, but we thought it best not to leave the kids behind or bring them through time compression. You know they’d be four if they stayed here?”



Luna nodded. "But what about your safari?"

"Never been to Japan before. Just look at these grounds! Sure to be some interesting things to find there. And, well we can always use your real days to explore the wilds. There're supposed to be some really rare creatures in the mountains."

"I'd like that, Daddy."

"Besides, you do know that one day this will become public. The Quibbler will be the only paper that can provide a first hand account of what this place is and what our kids are learning here. Scoop the lot of them, we will. Someone will need to refute the propaganda that the Ministry and Prophet will trumpet when this is no longer a secret."

"Who better than the Quibbler to spread the truth?"

"My thoughts exactly," Xeno said.

SCHOOL DAY 1,496 - 1990 SUMMER SESSIONS – THE  
WATANABE SCHOOL OF MAGICAL STUDIES, KYOTO, JAPAN.

Percy Weasley was sitting in his favorite grotto in the vast gardens that encompassed most of the school grounds. He had learned that the gardens were all based upon similar gardens both at various palaces in Japan and various shrines, all designed in one way another to be a perfect vision of what nature could achieve, if nature had an artistic intent. There was a small pond in a grove of trees and all around the ground was covered in a deep, green carpet of moss. It was, Percy had found, a very peaceful place, which was the designers intent.

He was not alone. With him was a blonde haired girl his age named Penelope Clearwater. They weren't sure if they were officially boyfriend-girlfriend yet, whatever that meant, but at least unofficially they were. This place was special for the added reason it was the first place Percy had taken Penelope when she agreed on a "date." It was also the first place they had kissed, on that "date." For now, however, they just sat and enjoyed the serenity of their grotto.



“Hey guys,” a voice called out. Percy turned and saw his two younger brothers approaching. It took him a second to realize they had been addressed in English. “Not interrupting anything are we?” Fred asked.

“No, not really,” Penelope said.

“Mind if we join you two for a bit?” George asked.

“Pull up a rock,” Penelope said. Percy nodded in agreement.

“Hard to believe it’s over for now,” George said as he sat down.

The others nodded in agreement.

“Pity we still have to go back to Hogwarts,” Penelope said. “I mean why? So what if they find out? We can shift now. We just return next summer.”

“It’s the younger kids,” Percy said. “The ones who’ve never been here can’t shift here.”

“I know. It’s just that...”

“Yeah,” Fred said. “Hogwarts isn’t this place.”

“It’s not all that bad,” Percy began. “I’m sure McGonagall, Flitwick and Sprout could teach here...”

“True bro,” Fred said.

“But they are not allowed to teach what they teach here,” George added.

“Then there’s Snape,” Fred continued.

Percy snorted. “Harry Potter’s a better Potions teacher.”



“No surprise there,” Fred said. They had learned that part of the program for a Mastery was you had to teach “younger” kids. The role of the Master is not to hoard knowledge, but to pass it along to others. It was obviously not the case with the Hogwarts Potions professor. The truth was that Potter was a very good teacher.

“Still, there is a bright side,” Fred said after a pause.

“And that is?” Percy asked.

“Well, you got your N.E.W.T.s, we got our O.W.L.s...”

“It’s not like we need to be – er – model students next fall,” George added.

“Think of all the pranks we could focus on!” Fred said.

“There is that,” Percy agreed. Percy had been magical prefect for three sessions (years). Next summer, he would be non-magical Head Boy, at least for the British School as it was now called. Like the others, Hogwarts as a school was no longer that important to him. By this time next year he would have at least one Mastery and a university degree, two things he would never get at Hogwarts. Besides, one had to like a school where creative pranks were rewarded, provided they were not mean spirited or done in a way to undermine the learning environment. The work load had limited their pranking times. Basically, only their off days were available for planning, experimentation and implementation of the Weasley Specialty. Still, there had been some memorable ones.

SUNDAY, JULY 29th, 1990 – THE WATANABE SCHOOL OF MAGICAL STUDIES, KYOTO, JAPAN.

“Grandfather?” Harry and Clarice asked as Lord Black appeared stepping through The Red Gate into the grounds of their school with Remus Lupin.



“Amazing,” Lord Black said looking at the vast plaza that spread out before him with the distinctive Japanese buildings – the academic winds along the edges and the tall apartment blocks in the center. “Quite larger than I expected.”

“This isn’t half of it,” Clarice said. “The gardens just beyond seem to go on forever.”

“Only if you walk around the grounds,” Harry chuckled. “We’re surprised to see you, Grandfather.”

“Wasn’t going to miss this,” he replied. “Sirius would be here too, but he wasn’t about to leave Sophie behind, so here I am. Besides, he was here last year and plans to be next. He did say this was worth the trip and I can see why. You do know you two are the first ‘Black’s’ to receive a second Mastery that I am aware of?”

The kids shook their heads.

“And certainly the first to receive a university degree. Okay, maybe not the first. I had a first cousin who was a squib named Marius who was a solicitor or some such, so he might have earned one. Still, certainly the first witch and wizard so honored.”

“Thank you,” the kids replied.

“How’d you get here?” Clarice asked. “You weren’t with the flight.”

“Much as I admire Muggle technology,” Lord Black said, “I never truly had the desire to ride in an airplane. Remus and I came by Portkey.”

“Surely the Ministry...”

“Head of and Ancient and Noble House,” Lord Black replied. “Those sort of Ministry regulations do not apply. Got my own reusable Portkey. Remind me to show it to you one of these days. So, where are the others?”



“Hermione’s with the Grangers and Aunt Minnie. They’re with the Longbottoms, Lovegoods and Bones somewhere on campus.”

“Well,” Lord Black said, “what say you two show us the sites?”

“How many students are here?” Amelia Bones asked.

“Summer is divided into five Sessions,” Hermione replied. “Each session is similar to a full year. About six hundred students are full summer from all over. In our year twenty-five full summer English students and about eighty overall at any one time. All combined, our year has over four hundred students from over sixty countries. A lot of the students only attend for a session or two, not all five. Still, all told there are perhaps five thousand students here at any one time.”

“That many?”

Hermione nodded. “They teach the same stuff during Time Compression as they would during their regular year. The Japanese students who attend here start at age six and finish Secondary School and their N.E.W.T.s twelve years later. Masteries take three to six years. Undergraduate four to five. A Masters degree two to three, similar time for a doctorate. Students can start here at six and still be here in their late twenties.”

“And they have five thousand here during the year?”

“Closer to eight thousand,” Hermione said. “A third of all Japanese magical children are here through Secondary School and N.E.W.T.s. And this is the only magical university so any studying for Masteries or degrees attend here, or overseas.”

“So a few hundred of our children?”

“Well, the Muggles are paying for the new dorm for us,” Hermione said. “But it’s not a huge strain on their system. Certainly not after the first session.”



“Why not?”

“After first session, everyone speaks Japanese,” Minerva replied. “Once there is a common language for all students, the language specific instruction ends, except for actual language courses. It takes less faculty to teach in one language than twenty or so.”

The group was approaching the new dormitory and Hermione saw a gathering of red heads which she instantly knew were the Weasleys.

“Sixty seconds,” the boy she recognized as Percy said.

Hermione already was suspicious. She hurried over with the others trying to keep up and her mouth fell when she heard the next voice.

“Don’t tell me you three have a prank going,” Molly Weasley scolded.

“Okay, we won’t,” one of the twins replied.

“I can’t believe ... in front of everyone?”

“Dr. Chen, Dean of Charms approved,” the other twin started.

“I don’t care if Merlin himself...”

“Thirty seconds,” Percy said looking at his watch.

“Put a stop to this,” Molly started.

“Can’t,” one of the twins replied.

“On a timer,” the other added.

“Stopping it only sets it off sooner.”

“Which would ruin the effect.”

“We can’t have that.”



“What have I done wrong,” Molly moaned.

“Ten seconds, nine, eight, seven...”

When Percy said “NOW,” the entire dormitory section turned shocking pink and ...

“Fluffy, just as advertised, Perce,” one of the twins said.

“Give it a few,” Percy replied nodding with approval as he noted scores of people taking pictures. “Should change color every fifteen to thirty seconds until the effect wears off.”

“And how long will that be?” Molly asked.

“Well, not as long as Hogwarts,” one twin replied.

“Should be back to normal by sunset, latest,” the other added.

“Bloody brilliant,” Ron and Mr. Weasley said in unison.

“Arthur,” Molly scolded, “the last thing these three miscreants need is any more encouragement!”

MONDAY, JULY 31st, 1990 – THE WATANABE SCHOOL OF MAGICAL STUDIES, KYOTO, JAPAN.

“Will the candidates for Secondary School Certifications please rise,” a voice announced before nearly 450 British students and their families. Ten students rose from their seats and lined up to one side of the stage. One by one, their names were called and the ten students who had begun school in Japan walked across and received diplomas indicating successful completion of non-magical secondary education. Following an applause, they returned to their seats.



“Will the candidates for baccalaureate degrees please rise?” This time, nine students lined up before the stage. The first name was called: “Ms. Amber Evans.”

After Jason Evans walked off with his college degree, the voice announced. “Ms. Hermione Jane Granger.” Hermione walked on stage to a vigorous applause and she was not sure which made her blush more, the applause from her countrymen and friends or her father being very obvious with his camera. “Ms. Granger is receiving two degrees,” the Dean of Students said. “First, her Bachelor of Arts in History, magna cum laude,” and Hermione was handed a leather bound folder in which was the certificate indicating she was now a college graduate with high honors. “Finally, her Bachelor of Arts in Political Science, summa cum laude,” indicating she had the highest honors in this field. “Ms. Granger is currently pursuing her Masters in Political Science.”

“Ms. Clarice Lillian Jameson” was next. She received her Bachelor of Science in Economics, magna cum laude, a field which she found interesting and in which she intended to attain both her Master’s and Doctoral degrees. “Mr. Harry James Potter” received his Bachelor of Science magna cum laude, in chemistry and was pursuing advanced degrees in the same field. The last to cross the stage winced as her name was called. Still, Dora Tonks smiled for all when she received her Bachelor of Science in Mathematics.

With the non-magical side done, the O.W.L. recipients were called forward. Before the first envelop was handed to the first of 444 students in line, the head of Magical Education announced that not one of them had failed a single O.W.L. This did not mean there were not Acceptables in the group, the lowest passing score, but it was an accomplishment that needed to be stressed. The three Weasley boys were strait Outstandings much to their mother’s joy when she finally saw the results. She was stunned to learn they actually got credit for creative pranks.

With the O.W.L.s out of the way, 158 rose for their N.E.W.T.s, including Susan Bones, Neville Longbottom and Luna Lovegood. Percy Weasley, the only Weasley this time, took Honors in Charms to



the delight of Molly who would not learn of his other scores until later as she was screaming too loud for her son to hear the rest. Neville had honors again in Herbology and With Distinction in Potions, Defense and Transfiguration, much to Augusta's pleasure. Luna took Honors in Magical Zoology and had a few With Distinctions as well. Susan had all Outstandings with four With Distinctions. Needless to say, there were proud parents and guardians throughout.

Finally, thirteen students rose for their Masteries, all of whom had been in Japan at least one prior summer. Clarice received her Defense Mastery, along with all ten students who had begun the year before. She was already working towards her Advanced Healing Certificate. Hermione received her Transfiguration Mastery, deciding to get that out of the way before starting towards Spell Crafting. Finally, Harry received his Mastery in Potions. He was now studying Curse Breaking.

It was a large group of delighted parents, families and students who would leave Japan over the next few days for their homes. Most were set to go on holiday or take a break before they had to return to their now redundant magical schools back home. Six adults knew that their real work was about to begin, now that the British Invasion was returning home. Minerva hoped the secret would and could be kept.



A/N: This Chapter could also be titled "Don't Trust Old Men Baring Lemon Drops..."

## CHAPTER FIFTY: SOME SECRETS REVEALED

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 15th, 1990 – POTTER HOUSE, LONDON, U.K.

"I don't see why we just don't go in and do it," Neville protested. He looked around at the people gathered in the room. In addition to his Gran who was nodding in agreement, there was: Sirius Black, Lord Black, Remus Lupin, Minerva McGonagall, the Grangers, Luna Lovegood and Harry, Hermione and Clarice. "I mean," he continued, "we learned some ways how to help them this summer! We can't not try!"

"Neville," Hermione said, "Harry's not suggesting that. He's worried about after if we succeed."

"What's to worry about?" Neville said. "The Death Eaters that did that to my parents are in prison! They come home if they're better."

"Did you ever wonder why they attacked your parents in the first place, Neville?" Harry asked.

"Everyone knows why. 'Cause my parents were Aurors and those bastards were trying to find out about what happened to You-Know-Who!"

"Mrs. Longbottom?" Harry asked. "Were your son and daughter-in-law working as Aurors when they were attacked?"

"Er, well not really," Augusta said somewhat surprised at the question.

"What?" Neville asked.



“Well, they had been hiding under a Fideleus Charm of well over a year. They were attacked less than a week after the charm was dropped. I guess technically they were in refresher training, so ...”

“So, despite their past reputation, they would have known as much about the whereabouts of Voldemort as anyone who read the Daily Prophet and probably not much more,” Harry said.

Augusta nodded. “I hadn’t really thought about that...”

“Okay, let’s build a timeline of who knew what when,” Harry said. “First off, who knows when my parents were placed under the Charm?”

Remus and Sirius raised their hands. “Late June 1980,” Sirius said. “About a month before you were born.”

“You were the original secret keeper, right?”

Sirius nodded. “Then we changed...”

“We’ll get there. One step at a time. Okay, you were Secret Keeper. Aside from my parents, who else knew?”

“Remus, that rat Pettigrew and Dumbledore.”

“Not the Longbottoms?”

Sirius shook his head.

“Why was that Charm cast?”

“Dumbledore had reason to believe your parents were targets for a Death Eater attack.”

Harry nodded. “Okay, Augusta. When were Frank and Alice placed under the Fidelius Charm?”



“About the same time. I was Secret Keeper. Frank’s Uncle Algie was in the know as was Dumbledore.”

“And why the Charm?”

“Same reason as Sirius said. Dumbledore they would be attacked,” Augusta said.

“I take it Dumbledore cast the charm in both cases?” Harry asked.

August and Sirius both nodded.

“Okay, Neville was born July 30th and I was born the next day. Aside from the people we’ve already discussed, who knew?”

“No one,” Sirius said. “Not right away at any rate.”

Augusta nodded. “Dumbledore asked me to withhold a birth announcement until after the threat to Frank and Alice passed.”

“Okay, now then in August 1980, we have two families under a Fideleus Charm each with a newborn son. In both instances, there was no immediate birth announcement as would be customary. I’d assume that the pregnancies were not exactly State Secrets, correct?”

The adults nodded in agreement.

“When did our births become public?” Harry asked.

“Someone leaked it to the press about six months after you were born,” Sirius said. “At least that’s what I think. I know James and Lily did not make a formal announcement.”

“Neither did we,” Augusta said. “The story was front page and had their dates of birth and everything, but we never released it.”



“In July 1981 my sister was born,” Harry continued. “Sirius, who knew about that?”

“Aside from your parents, only I did at the time,” Sirius replied.

“Not Remus?”

“Dumbledore thought there was a traitor in the Order,” Sirius said. “He suspected Remus and sent him off to the continent on some mission.”

“I was gone for over a year,” Remus said. “Auror’s gave me an overseas posting. I didn’t return until middle of ’82.”

“And Pettigrew?” Harry asked.

“He was told to keep away,” Sirius said. “Far as I know he never went to the house after the charm was cast.”

“Dumbledore?”

“Never was there. From the time that the Charm was cast until the night it happened, he never was there.”

“At some point, Pettigrew became the Secret Keeper,” Harry said. “When?”

“About two weeks before it all happened,” Sirius replied. “Dumbledore believed the Death Eaters were on to me and recommended a change.”

“Whose idea was it to use Pettigrew?”

“Dumbledore’s,” Sirius said. “James, Lily and I agreed that James should be the Keeper, but Dumbledore said to do that would bar access to anyone not living in the house and he needed to be able to respond in an emergency. Dumbledore insisted on Pettigrew.”



“I see,” Harry said. “Okay, while the Charm was up, did either of my parents leave that house?”

“Not that I know of,” Sirius said. “I won’t say it never happened, but the protections only work while you are under them and they both knew that. Leave the protection and you are open to attack.”

“How did we eat?”

“I kept them supplied with provisions,” Sirius said.

Harry looked at Augusta.

“I did the same for Frank, Alice and Neville,” she said. “Oh my! I just remembered something.”

“What?” Neville asked.

“Dumbledore! A couple of weeks before that night he came to me and suggested changing Secret Keepers! It didn’t go anywhere. It seemed he had someone in mind, but I was having none of it and he didn’t push the issues.”

“Interesting,” Harry said glancing at Hermione and Clarice who nodded. “And why was that?” he asked Augusta.

She shrugged. “He said the Death Eaters would catch me sooner or later. I had already stocked the place with more food than we would need in a couple of years, so I just moved in with Frank and Alice. Problem solved.”

“Wish I had thought of that,” Sirius said.

“Sirius? How many times did my parents face Voldemort himself before the night they were murdered?”

“Three times,” Sirius said. “Although they were not alone. Frank, Alice, Remus and I were with them all three times.”



“Yet neither you nor Remus were married or expecting a child.”

Sirius nodded.

“Okay, let’s sum up,” Harry said. “In June 1980, two couples, all of whom are Auror’s and have been a pain in Voldemort’s neck are expecting a child. Dumbledore tells them separately that they are in danger and suggests the use of the Fideleus Charm. He performs the Charm and knew who both Secret Keepers were. He is the only one who knows that. Within hours of each other at the end of that July the two women give birth to sons. About fifteen months later, Dumbledore tries to convince both families to change Secret Keepers. My parents do. The Longbottoms do not. Two weeks later Pettigrew betrays my parents and Voldemort comes a knocking. With me so far Neville?”

“Dumbledore set us up?” Neville asked.

“So it would seem,” Harry replied.

“Why?”

Harry spent the next several minutes telling the Longbottoms, Luna and Lord Black about the Prophecy. This included a summary of what he, Hermione and Clarice thought about it – that it could mean anything or nothing at all, but that two wizards, neither of whom had ever studied that branch of magic, believed it meant that either he or Neville was the only person who could defeat Voldemort.

“So Dumbledore set us up?” Neville said. “He wanted to see who Voldemort would go after!”

“Actually, Voldemort would come after me anyway, but for another reason that’s not important right now. No, Dumbledore wanted to see which of us would survive to be marked. Then and only then could the next phase of his plan begin.”

“And that was?” Lord Black asked.



“We believe that Dumbledore believes that the child of the Prophecy will die defeating Voldemort. Thus, he wanted that child groomed for what any sane man would see as a suicide mission.”

“What makes you think that?” Augusta asked.

“Everything that’s happened since,” Harry replied. “My home was attacked. The only survivors were myself and my sister and neither of us was old enough to remember anything. There were no other witnesses to what happened and within hours it’s all over the press that I defeated Voldemort! I wonder how that happened? I have no recollection and I know I never gave an interview. The only evidence that I was involved at all was a scar, and that could have been from anything. Yet the whole wizarding world believed within hours that a fifteen month old boy no one had ever seen had saved the day.

“What happens next? Dumbledore places me with my mother’s sister against the provisions of my parents Will and the protests of Minerva here. He admitted in that investigation regarding my treatment that he had done so. Now here’s the rub. That Will identified several people to whom I should have been sent. Three of them knew it. One was Sirius and the other two were Alice and Frank Longbottom. Within a couple of days, Sirius is locked away in Azkaban without a trial and left to rot. Every Death Eater had a trial, even the ones who confessed! Sirius did not and who was head of the Courts? Did you know Sirius was the only person in at least the last three hundred years to be sent there without a trial?

“A couple of weeks later, Frank and Alice are attacked within a few days of being told – by Dumbledore no doubt – that they could leave the safe house and return home. The three people who could challenge my placement were eliminated. Coincidence?”

“Wait,” Augusta said. “How did the LeStanges learn about Frank and Alice?”

“Dumbledore had a spy in the Death Eaters,” Harry replied. “It’s now public record following the man’s trial a couple of weeks after the



LeStanges were convicted. Spies can also pass information the other way.”

“Snape!” Sirius growled. “I’ll kill the bastard!”

Harry shook his head. “First off, that’s only my educated guess. Secondly, assuming I’m right he’s merely a pawn. It’s the Chess Master I’m worried about. Throughout my life he has maintained that everything he did was for my safety! Yet, when one looks at what he did if we take him at his word then he is either the biggest moron on the face of this planet who could be outwitted by a stunned troll or a lunatic.

“Within hours of my parents death, the entire Wizarding World believes I beat Voldemort at fifteen months of age. Only two people were there after the fact and before I was secreted away: Sirius and Dumbledore – and neither of them witnessed what happened. Someone leaked a story to the press. Now, if he really wanted me totally safe, why not tell the press my Mum killed Voldemort? There’s no evidence to refute that, is there? It’s a more plausible explanation of what happened, isn’t it? And, no one would care about little ol’ me, would they?

“And yet a whole industry of “Boy Who Lived” children’s books and comics sprang up almost overnight and continue to this day. Until about two years ago, the illustrated Harry Potter bore an uncanny resemblance to me! How was that possible if I was being hidden from the magical world? Perhaps someone was inspiring the artists?

“There were at least a couple of times before I went to live where I do now when I was out and an older person I’d never met before – never the same one – recognized me. They dressed off and I now know they were magical. I was five or six. How did they recognize me?”

“You do look a lot like your father,” Augusta said.

“Do you honestly believe that connection could be made out of context and in the Muggle world? Was my Dad that famous? Was his



face plastered on every street corner and on the front page of every paper like the Princess of Wales? I know it was not. Somehow magical people knew what I looked like even though I had never set foot in their world or associated with their kind.

“When Dumbledore placed me where he did, it was with my mother’s sister who hated my Mum and magic. She and her husband made it clear for as long as I could remember that they would beat the ‘freakishness’ out of me and very nearly succeeded about two years ago when they damn near killed me. Safe?

“No! I became safe ‘cause Dumbledore made a mistake. He cast a Blood Ward over me when he left me. The ward protected me from magicals, but not from my relatives. Then, I wound up in hospital, my relatives died, and I met my sister Clarice – all conveniently while Dumbledore believed I was dead. When Clarice and I became the family we were meant to be, the Wards hit full strength. Dumbledore and the entire wizarding world forgot about this Harry Potter. The next issue of ‘The Adventures of Harry Potter’ no longer had a skinny, black haired, green eyed boy with broken glasses and baggy old clothes who looked like a lap dog could take him out but a blonde haired, blue eyes boy with overdeveloped muscles and all that.

“I’m sorry for my rant, Neville. I do want to help your parents. But my concern is when we succeed what will happen next. Dumbledore no longer remembers me as his pawn. But he probably remembers your parents and that he did what he did for some reason and maybe that in his opinion your parents recovery is not for his Greater Good, whatever rubbish that is. He might not yet seek me out, but were they to recover, he would seek them out. That would lead to you and he might through that begin to remember. You would lead to the Club, and we don’t want that and then to me.

“No, when your parents recover, we need for them to disappear, at least until we can get Dumbledore out of the picture. I don’t want him after me until next summer. By then the Club cannot be stopped by him or the Ministry – although I’d like to keep them off of that scent for even longer. More important, neither of us will be pawns anymore. When we return from Japan, we will be legally adults in every sense



of the word having attained more than seventeen years of life and having passed our eleventh birthday and he cannot touch us then. Throw in you'll be at least the Heir Apparent of and Ancient and Noble House and I will be the Head of and Ancient and Noble House and if he were to try, it could be the end of him politically."

"And how do we make them disappear?" Neville asked.

"That's the easy part," Clarice said. "They come here. Only those people who are trustworthy can ever know of this place due to Dumbledore's Blood Wards, and he most certainly is not."

"You know they are more powerful than the Fideleus Charm," Harry added.

Neville nodded. "Gran and I would have to live here too, most likely."

"We know," Clarice said. "We all live on the first floor. Sirius and Sophie have half the Second Floor and Remus the other half. The whole Third Floor is unused."

"Gran?" Neville asked.

"How will they get here?" Augusta asked.

"Still working on that," Clarice said, "although we think it best to bring them here as is and cure them after."

Neville nodded. "When?"

"We could use it as a distraction to keep Dumbledore away from Hogwarts when our friends begin classes. Say the day before their classes start?"

"That would be Sunday, September Second," Minerva said. "Between missing Longbottoms and his obsession with the Baby Scandal, we might see little of him at Hogwarts this coming term."

SATURDAY, AUGUST 25th, 1990 – CAMP W, U.K.



To say that Ron Weasley had been a little intimidated when he first stepped into the large assembly room at Camp W would be an understatement. Never before in his life had he ever seen so many people and the fact that almost every one of them was technically a “child” stunned him. He had no idea that there were so many young witches and wizards in the world. He had heard that this Club had more kids than Hogwarts had students, but he had no real concept what that had meant. It seemed for a moment as if all the insecurities he had once felt came rushing back.

He knew why he had once had those feelings, along with intense feelings of frustration, anger and jealousy. He wanted to be as good as his older brothers and they had learned to read. He tried. Beginning at age five he tried. But it seemed no matter how hard he tried, he could not do it. He didn't want to be dumb, but feared he was and the fact that he seemed to understand some things better than anyone he knew did not erase these feelings. No one had ever beaten him at chess, but he could not learn to read even a simple “kiddie” book. Two years ago, his frustration got the better of him one day and his Mum took his precious broom away and told him he would never see it again unless he learned to read. His older brothers and younger sister joined the Club, but he was not allowed to because he was being stubborn in his mother's opinion. How could he tell his Mum it was not that he was lazy or didn't want to, he just couldn't.

Two winters ago, his Mum took him to London one day. His younger sister was with them, but he was the reason they were going. They travelled magically by the Floo network to The Leaky Cauldron. At first, Ron thought they were going to Diagon Alley for some shopping, except they left the tavern and headed into Muggle London. He wondered if they were going to the Ministry where his Dad worked, except he knew you could Floo there and besides, they were walking in the wrong direction. Perhaps St. Mungos, except they walked right by the building and on for another few blocks before they turned into a very tall building. It was obvious even to a seven year old wizard that this was a Muggle building.



He found himself in an office with his Mother and sister and another woman who was a Muggle healer of some sort and who knew about magic, having married a wizard herself. She gave Ron a series of tests and asked him a lot of questions, none of which made any sense to him. Then she started talking to his Mum. First off, Ron was actually a very bright boy, she said. Ron was capable of hard work and figuring out very complex problems for a kid his age. Almost all of his “issues” could be attributed to his reading problem and it was not that the boy was not trying or did not want to learn. He had a learning disability. And no, this was not a sickness nor was there any potion, spell or Muggle medicine that would make it better. Ron could learn to read, just not in the same manner or by the same method that most children did. He would have to learn differently. Words like “compensation techniques” and “coping strategies” were used. And “No, Mrs. Weasley, it’s not your fault.”

He was given exercises and stuff. It was hard work and Ron knew reading would never be as easy for him as others, but there were very smart and famous people who had the exact same problem and did quite well. So, with his exercises and a schedule of weekly visits to London, they left for their home in Devon.

What surprised him was the Muggle lady was right. He could learn to read and did. It was still hard, but if the reading was about something that interested him, he would do it now. But what really surprised him was his sister. When he was frustrated, he usually took it out on her because she was the youngest, a girl, and at that time not likely to prank him into next week to retaliate. But now it was his sister more than anyone who helped and encouraged him. She also began teaching him what she was learning at the Club. It turned out that practical magic came easily, he thought. Reading about it was still hard.

He had entered the Assembly Room along with well over seven hundred others. Apparently, there were seven hundred and eighteen who had been in the Club last year and all were back. But there were also sixty “Newbies” and Ron was one of them. At age ten, Ron was one of the oldest. The youngest were six. They stood in six lines to have their names crossed off a list by another kid and were then given some papers and told to go to a room in an adjoining building



where they would change into their “Club Suits.”

Ron was now dressed in a khaki shirt with the number '91 on one collar. There was a blue woolen jumper in “his” locker (it had his name on it), but the weather was warm. His shirt had his name over a pocket and some black straps on the shoulders that had a thin red stripe and a silver “H”. On the left sleeve near the shoulder was what he knew was a small flag of some sort. He was told it was the English flag meaning that he lived in England and everyone had a flag that showed where they lived.

He soon found himself seated in the Assembly Room with the other “Newbies.” Three children stood before them. Two Ron recognized and the third he did not. They were all about his age. The two he recognized were Harry Potter and Luna Lovegood. Luna, after all, was a neighbor and he had met Harry before. The other kid, who was actually a year older than Harry, was about to start his first year at St. George's. All three, they were told, had spent at least two summers in Japan and all had already earned their O.W.L.s, N.E.W.T.s and at least one Mastery.

Harry introduced himself and Ron could tell from the reaction of many in the room that they made the connection between Harry Potter and that “Boy-Who-Lived.” Apparently, Harry did too. He admitted his parents were murdered by Voldemort (the crowd gasped at the name) and he was probably there. But anything else they had heard about “The Boy Who Lived” was a lie. Anyone who honestly believed a fifteen month old baby could defeat and kill a full grown wizard was a gullible fool (thereby accusing most of wizarding Britain, Ron thought) and Harry had some land in the English Channel he wanted to sell them. Harry admitted he lived as a Muggle and knew nothing about magic at all until he was almost eight years old. This seemed to stun at least some in the room.

“And no, I've never fought a dragon,” Harry said referring to the common Harry Potter Adventure plot. “Seen one in a zoo once in Japan, but that's about it. My only ‘super power’ is I can talk to snakes, assuming they're in a chatty mood and most of the time they are not.”



“So you’re a dark wizard?” a kid asked as several gasped.

“Nothing ‘dark’ about it,” Harry said. “In Australia, I could make a fortune with that ability given they have loads of deadly snakes and loads of people, Muggle and Magical, who’ll pay a lot of money to get rid of them. Only Britain considers that ability Dark. And no, I can’t teach that. You’re either born with that ability or not.”

Harry then gave a brief lecture on “Dark Magic.” It was not the magic that was dark in almost all cases, but the intent of the magician. Most “Dark Magic” in Britain was really “Foreign Magic” or magic that could not be controlled or regulated by the Ministry. Here, they would be learning wandless magics, which could not be regulated the way wand magic could. These magics were not taught in the British schools and many magical Britons assumed they were either too hard to learn or must be Dark, otherwise it would be taught.

He then said he would demonstrate just how easy wandless magic really was. To Ron’s horror, Harry called him up to the platform. Harry gave Ron a feather and told Ron to make it do something. Ron knew this drill. It was the first thing Ginny had showed him. The feather was soon tap dancing across the stage and doing an occasional flip. He then waved a hand and made it fly around the room as his confidence grew before Harry asked him to stop. Ron was then asked to turn it into something else. Feeling a little mischievous, there was soon a small, shocking pink, rubber chicken where the feather had been, although it did turn back to normal in a few seconds.

“Very good,” Harry said to Ron. “Nice touch with the chicken.”

“Thanks,” Ron said.

Harry turned to the others. “Okay, I will admit, Ron is not an absolute novice. I’ve been told his sister, who’s been with us for two years, has taught him at least the basics. But! I can assure you that all of you will be able to do something similar before you finish here today!”



Harry then asked Ron to assist the other two instructors in helping the other kids do their first controlled magic. Ron remembered what his sister had told him and how easy it was if you believed you could do it. With several kids, he basically said to them what she had said to him and, sure enough, within a couple of hours at the most, they all could make their feathers do something with their magic and turn it into something else. He told them it did not yet matter what they made it do or what it turned into as long as it responded in some way to their magical intent. Control would take longer, but it was not as hard as it might seem.

Like most of the kids, Ron was staying at Camp W for the night. They usually continued teaching something, but the first day was more about getting to know your way around and meeting others. After their first “lesson” Ron found he had four kids who he had been working with hanging around with him. Two were boys and two were girls. Three appeared to be about his age. One of the girls was obviously either a midget or a lot younger, Ron thought.

“That was SO cool,” the midget said. “I was SO hoping it would be! I’m Renee Greengrass. My two older sisters have been in this for two years. We all get to go to Japan together. Can’t wait!”

“How old are you?” the other girl asked.

“Be seven in October. You can start there at seven.”

“Wish I knew earlier.”

“Actually, not unless you were rich or something,” Ron said without a hint of bitterness. “Harry and his sisters have only gone for three summers and they were the first from this country to go in ages. The summer after there were a few more. This past summer they sent something like four hundred, but all of them were already in school. Next summer is the earliest we could go.”

“Really?”



Ron nodded. "Three of my older brothers went this summer. My sister and I went there when they finished, but that was just to visit."

"You've been there?" Renee asked. "What's it like?"

"It's pretty cool," Ron said. "But my brothers say it's also hard work. They say it's harder than Hogwarts was. Still, they learned loads and already have their O.W.L.s. Percy, who's the older one, also got his N.E.W.T.s. They don't have Quidditch, though."

"That's okay," Renee said, "we've got the W.I.S.E. League here."

"Wise League," another red haired boy asked. He had a funny accent, Ron thought. "What's that?"

"Welsh, Irish, Scots, English," Renee said. "All six British magical schools have kids in the Club and each school fields two teams. One's got older kids that are in school and the other is for those of us not yet eleven. I went to all the Hogwarts Dragons games last year. It was wicked, 'though we didn't win." The girl pouted.

"What's Quidditch," a dark skinned boy asked. "I – er – I didn't know magic was real until recently. Dean Thomas. I'm from London."

"I'm from London too," Renee said.

"Ron Weasley," Ron said. "Ottery St. Catchpole. It's in Devonshire."

"Seamus Finnegan," the other red haired boy said. "Belfast, Northern Ireland."

"Lavender Brown," the other girl said. "Coventry."

"Lavender?" Ron asked.

"My Mum says I was named for the flower. Daddy likes to say it was the color I was when I was born." Lavender shrugged. "I think he's teasing."



“So you didn’t know about magic?” Renee asked Dean.

He shrugged. “Some strange things would happen, but no. Then ‘bout a fortnight ago a couple of strange men showed up at my home. One called himself Lord Black and told my parents I was a wizard and said I should join this club. Thought he was right barmy ‘til today. Said my Dad was a wizard too. My Dad ain’t, but that Lord guy said my Dad wasn’t my real Dad. Mum said that was true. My real Dad left before I was born and all. But that Lord guy said that wasn’t what really happened. Said my real Dad was murdered in a wizard war. Oddly made Mum happy. She said it was ‘cause it didn’t mean he run out on her.”

“Me Dad’s a Muggle too,” Seamus said. “Mum’s the witch. She didn’t tell Dad ‘til after I first did magic as a wee lad. Bit of a shock fer him I was told. But he’s right with it now. Mum heard ‘bout this from her sister last year and here I am.”

“Muggle?” Dean asked.

“Means they ain’t a witch or wizard. Normal folk, you know,” Seamus said.

“We like to think we’re normal in our own way,” Ron said.

“Didn’t mean it like that. Meant they can’t do magic. Most people can’t.”

Lavender nodded. “My Dad’s parents can’t.”

“Well,” Renee said, “my sisters say that here whether your parents can do magic or not isn’t important. It’s what you can do that is.”

“Don’t know ‘bout you lot, but I’m hungry,” Ron said and the new group began to look for where they were going to eat.

As they entered what had been the Assembly Room, they saw it had been rearranged and furnished as a large dining hall that could seat



hundreds. None of them noticed the small gatherings of adults at some of the tables as they saw the line for the food and headed in that direction.

“What do you think?” Minerva asked the witch and diminutive wizard who were dining with her that evening tucked away in the large dining hall at Camp W.

“Wandless magic?” the wizard said in awe, “non-verbal spell casting? At such young ages?”

“The magic taught in most of the world derives from the ancient and aboriginal magics,” Minerva said. “Wands are but a tool, not a necessity and those ancient magics are best learned before one picks up a wand and preferably while still a child. It is the way magic is taught in many parts of the world.”

“Except Europe,” the witch said. “It certainly is not that way here. How can they learn control without wands and incantations.”

“Those are useful aides, ‘tis true,” Minerva answered. “But they become crutches robbing the witch or wizard of true control over their magic. Once the student realizes that they can control their magic without such a tool, as all the new ones learned today, they will then focus on mind magics. This will allow them to cast spells without wands and certainly without incantations. Every spell in our Syllabus can be done that way at least through O.W.L. level. Some N.E.W.T. levels are wand specific and must be cast with a wand and maybe even a muttered incantation. From what I have seen, the foreign method is far more effective than what we are allowed to do.”

“I’m particularly curious into how they learned about it,” the wizard said.

“And how they intend to get away with it,” the witch added. “It seems like an inspired idea, Minerva. Just the sort of idea dear old Albus, the Ministry and Wizengamot would consider subversive in the least.”



“Why not ask?” Minerva said seeming to waive at someone she recognized.

Five children came over. Two were boys and three were girls. They all wore their “Club Suits”, each almost identical. All five had three broad silver stripes on each of their shoulders with a silver “H”, although three also had a silver star between the “H” and the stripes. Those three had the number ’88 on their right collar while the other two had the number ’89. “May we join you?” the boy with raven hair and glasses asked.

“Please,” Minerva said. She then indicated to the two already seated. “These are some colleagues of mine from Hogwarts interested in a more enlightened education,” she said. “This is Professor Filius Flitwick. He teaches charms and is Head of Ravenclaw House. And this is Professor Pomona Sprout. She teaches Herbology and is Head of Hufflepuff House. Pomona, this lad,” Minerva said indicating a sandy haired boy, “is Neville Longbottom. He scored Honors in Herbology on both his O.W.L.s and N.E.W.T.s.”

“Really?” Pomona asked. “That is quite impressive, young man. Although, to be honest, you don’t even look old enough for Hogwarts.”

“I was born ten years ago,” Neville began with a blush. “But technically I’m eighteen and have ten years of combined magical and non-magical education.”

“Or,” the blonde haired girl with them said, “as we say ten-eighteen and ten. Ten years old by your calendar, eighteen by ours and ten years of school. I’m Luna Lovegood, I’m almost ten. Or, I’m nine-eighteen and ten. Neville and I also have our I.C.W. Defense Certs.”

The two guests of Minerva’s sat dumbfounded.

“Harry Potter,” the raven haired boy said, “I’m ten-twenty-three and fifteen. Masters in Defense and Potions.”



“Hermione Granger,” said the brown, bushy haired girl. “I’m almost eleven. Ten-twenty-four and fifteen. Masters in Defense and Transfiguration.”

“Clarice Jameson,” said the raven haired girl who looked almost like the female twin of Harry, “nine-twenty-three and fifteen. Masters in Defense and Basic Healer.”

“Time Compression?” Filius asked.

Minerva nodded. “A more beneficial use of that magic than here, don’t you think?”

“Surely this place,” Pamina started.

“We attend school in Japan during the summer,” Harry said.

“The Watanabe School?” Filius asked.

The kids nodded. They were surprised that the short man knew about the school.

“I didn’t know any went there from here,” he continued. “I didn’t know it was allowed.”

“Well, it’s not illegal,” Hermione replied. “It is expensive, but there are ways around that. However, we are concerned that should the wrong people find out they might keep our younger members from attending. They’ve taken the oath, Aunt Minne?”

Minerva nodded. “Hermione’s somewhat in charge of security arrangements regarding our candidates to that school and this Club.”

“Arrangements?” Pamina asked.

Hermione shrugged. “More of a clearing house than a boss. This facility’s security is handled by its owners and I look them over and suggest improvements, if any. Each school handles its own security, which I review and pass on to the others. Some ideas work for them



as well, but as each school has its own unique challenges and I cannot very well go to them, we let them do what works best for them.”

“Why do you need security? Is this illegal or something?”

“No, not really. Well, maybe the wand bit, but even that falls within a loophole in the law. The law does not forbid parents from sending children overseas for education, nor does it forbid young children from travelling abroad to learn. The law does not expressly forbid teaching wandless magic or mind magic. All it does regulate is what is taught in our schools here. Not what we can learn outside of the Ministry sponsored schools.”

“And wands? How do you get around the law regarding underage magic use? I mean, are there wards or have you found some other way to mask the magic?”

“First,” Hermione said, “that law does not apply to wandless magic as, after all, all accidental magic is wandless. Second, there is no law about what age a child may have a wand. It only prohibits selling a wand to a child under age eleven. The law requires all wands sold in Britain to be registered with the Ministry of Magic. There is no corresponding law regarding wands purchased overseas. Everyone of us who has been to school in Japan has a Japanese wand. Moreover, none of us pass through magical customs so that, even in the unlikely event they found such a wand, it would be registered. Our first summer, we all travel by airplane. After that, we all know how to Shift and can travel from our bedroom to Japan instantaneously if we desire. Shifting is an aboriginal magic, thus it is neither taught here nor regulated nor really recognized as needing regulation. Thus, we all have legal if unregistered wands, even if it is by a loophole in the law and since underage magic can only be traced to registered wands … well, we get around that annoying law as well.”

“Why are you doing this?” Pamona asked. “I mean it seems a bit much.”



“Indeed,” Filius said. “I know that school has an exceptional international reputation. I might have been the best competition duelist in Europe in my day, but the Watanabe School graduates are top rate. I know that school is also far more expensive than any other I am aware of.”

“Well,” Hermione said, “our parents could afford to send us and they wanted us to have the best possible education period. In addition to magic, they also teach non-magical courses through doctorate level. Harry, Clarice and I also have university degrees and are working towards post-graduate degrees. As for the others, we have a very generous benefactor who believes no limits should be placed upon a child’s education except such limitations as the child places upon themselves. Regrettably, that is not the position of our magical government.”

“They’d seem to prefer a marginally educated population,” Harry said. “I can only guess that they’d prefer even less than that if they thought they could get away with it. Their educational policy over the last several generations, if not longer, is a direct reason why the Death Eaters nearly won the last war. Easy to win a war like that when the average witch or wizard knows barely enough magic to live comfortably without technology. What if the population was better educated?

“Look around you, Professors. In two years, every kid in this room will have a Defense Mastery. Most will have at least one other on top of that. Do you think the Death Eaters could terrorize a population that could take them out without trying? I will admit, because we are still magically children, your run of the mill Death Eater is more powerful. But our N.E.W.T. levels require far more combat skills to pass than most of those nutters ever knew. We must be able to attack, defend and move all at the same time. Defense is wandless. Attack can be or can be with a wand. No incantations. And we must be able to sustain a rate of offensive spell fire of three spells every two seconds or higher for five minutes continuous. Even at kiddie power levels, we can out-shoot the clumsy shield then shoot style taught here.”



“Which is part of our real problem,” Hermione said. “That more than any other consideration is why this Program remains secret from the general public and more critically the geriatric nostalgia society known as the Wizengamot. They hold this country back and keep it that way ‘cause no one knows any better. Do you think they would be happy about hundreds of kids with multiple masteries, which is what they will have by this time in 1992? Dumbledore is a supposed educator, Chief Warlock of the Wizengamot and practically the head of the government. For years, his word quite literally was law. Yet, despite having a fairly affluent society and strong magical economy, he has maintained or allowed this country to maintain one of the lowest educational standards in Europe, which itself is not generally capable of competing to I.C.W. standards. And, it’s not like he cannot possibly be aware of what the maximum standards are for he is also, last I checked, Supreme Mugwump of the I.C.W. You would figure that has supposed head of the international community he would express some concern about the poor educational standards in this country, but he has been silent on the subject.”

“Publically,” Harry added, “he tells the people we have the best standards in the world and Hogwarts is the best school. Nothing could be further from the truth.”

“Either he is ignorant,” Hermione said, “or he has some agenda. The more I read about him and his Greater Good, the more I am convinced he has some agenda and that agenda is not in the best interests of anyone not named Albus Dumbledore.”

“Our need for security is not a permanent situation,” Harry said. “We actually started this to help our friends learn magic. We had no grander vision. Yet now? Yes, I suppose we do have one. For now, it is to educate this generation to the highest possible standards. Long term, it is to ensure such education can continue for our children without the need to send them to the far corners of the Earth to get it. But, we have to survive, so to speak, to reach that day. That means only long enough that for our government to try to interfere would be both futile for them and folly. A year, two at the most, and they will be unable to resist the tide.”



“For us,” Hermione said, “each member, each member’s family, each school presents a security risk. However, while we have kids here from every school in Britain, the one that concerns me the most is Hogwarts. This fall, about four hundred and fifty kids will return to our schools after getting O.W.L.s, N.E.W.T.s and even Masters long before they were due to get them here. The other five schools, the kids live at home which significantly reduces the risks.

“Hogwarts has two major problems. First, it is a boarding school where the kids are there from September to June practically without any break. That increases the chance for a slip. Second, Dumbledore is Headmaster. Those kids are living right under the nose of the one person we can least afford have knowing about this for now. Consequently, our primary focus on security this year is that school. Minerva is our faculty rep and ran interference at that level last year. Dora Tonks is the senior student, although last year she was the only Watanabe attendee. We expect all to help in that regard.”

“Which is why they are here,” Minerva said. “Filius and Pamona are as disappointed with the state of things as I am. They’ve taken the magical oaths not to reveal to anyone what they saw and heard here today, otherwise they would not be here.”

“Wouldn’t have passed through security,” Hermione smirked.

“So, they’re going to help?”

“We’d like to,” Pamona said. “I think we need to learn more, though.”

“Well, there are loads of Hogwarts students here who would be more than happy to assist you in that way,” Harry said with a smile.

A silver patronus appeared in the form of a large dog. A panicked voice seemed to arise from nowhere: “Time ... Sophie ... St. Mungo’s ... where’s her bag? ... STOP LAUGHTING MOONEY!”

“Oh Dear,” Hermione said shaking her head.



“Looks like I’ve got to go,” Clarice said standing up. Before the stunned two professors, the girl disappeared without a sound.

“What was that about?” Pamona asked.

“Clarice shifted,” Harry shrugged. “She’s probably at St. Mungo’s.”

“What? Why?”

“My sister is a Healer. She does have patients and one of them, I’d guess, is about to have a baby,” Harry replied.

“We should go too,” Hermione said. “And one of us should probably get Lord Black.”

“I’ll do it,” Harry said. He stood and disappeared.

“I’ll let my parents know,” Hermione said to Minerva, “although they probably already do. Neville?”

“What?”

“Want to check on your folks?”

“Oh! Yeah. Sure.”

“I’ll just wait here then,” Luna shrugged.

“You’re more than welcome to come along, Luna,” Hermione replied. “And get Dora Tonks as well.”

“Right!” Luna said brightly and stood and began searching for Dora. Neville and Hermione also stood and they too soon vanished away.

“Impressive,” Filius said. “Can they do that dueling?”

“They can,” Minerva replied.



“Very impressive!”

SATURDAY, AUGUST 25th, 1990 – ST. MUNGO’S, LONDON, U.K.

Lord Black sat calmly in the waiting room talking with the others present. Neville had gone up with Luna to “check” on his parents. In truth, it was a scouting mission to test the vigilance of the night staff in that ward, which Neville would describe as non-existent. Harry, Hermione and Dora Tonks were there as well and were soon joined by Dora’s parents as well. The Grangers decided not to come as they would see the mother and child soon. Besides, they told Hermione, they had five quid down on the baby pool and another five that Sirius would faint and did not want to be there when they won.

Emily Lily Black was born at 21:47 hours in the evening to Sophia and Sirius Black. Sirius, who had fought in many life and death duels in his youth as an Auror and survived years of hell in Azkaban, passed out. It was all the more embarrassing, Hermione noted for the rest, given that he was in the waiting room at the time. Muggles tended to allow the father into the delivery room. Remus vowed his friend would never live that down. Sophie, on the other hand, was in the words of her Healer, “the perfect patient.” The Grangers were five pounds the wealthier, or at least they would be once Sirius came back to Potter House.



## CHAPTER FIFTY-ONE: CHAOS FACT

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 2nd, 1990 - POTTER HOUSE, LONDON, U.K.

Neville Longbottom looked at himself in the mirror in his new room. He was dressed all in black. Over his black, long sleeved shirt and trousers was a black belt with a black harness of sorts covered, it seemed with black pouches. In the pouches were all kinds of useful tools. He had potions and medical supplies, vials that could be used for distraction as they made smoke or bright flashes, throwing knives and other useful weapons. On his left arm was a black holster for his wand and another holster held his magically shrunken stave. The only color he saw was his face, hair and hands and the sharkskin handle of his sword which he had received upon completion of his Defense Mastery.

He and his Gran had moved to Potter House a few days before and were now living on the third floor. They had brought little with them from Longbottom Manor. They had their full wardrobes, some books and many priceless heirlooms, but that was it. The furnishings were all Potter House furnishings. Although Longbottom Manor was in lock down and a team of Ward Breakers might need weeks to get in, they had decided to make it look as if they were on holiday, even though they knew they would be here in London for a while.

Neville was nervous. He had not been this nervous in the burning lab when he and his friends had helped save Luna's Mum. Tonight was different. He was to rescue his own parents and it was his plan this time. He really did not want to mess it up. He reached back and removed his sword and scabbard laying it on the dresser before him. He was fairly certain he would not need it. In fact, if his plan worked, all he would need was the golden bracelet that was also lying upon the dresser. His last task before leaving for St. Mungo's would be to turn the bracelet into a timed portkey.

A knock at the door broke his chain of thought.

"Come in," he said. He could hear the door open but chose not to turn around, focusing on clearing his mind in preparation. Neville



soon saw the reflection of his visitor in the Mirror. Long, black hair, piercing green eyes, it was his friend Clarice.

“You look dashing,” she said with a smile.

Neville frowned.

“What’s the matter, Neville?” she asked.

“I’m ... I’m worried,” Neville confessed. “I’m afraid I’ll mess this up and ...” He felt a hand on his shoulder.

“Neville,” Clarice said with as much conviction as she could muster, “it’s a brilliant plan. It’s so simple. It cannot help but succeed! You’ll be there and back in less than a minute and then we can work on curing them.”

“What if I freeze up or something?”

“Neville, you didn’t freeze up in the fire. This is far less dangerous. You’ll do fine.”

“You think so?”

Clarice nodded. “You’re Neville Longbottom, you can’t help but succeed.”

“I hope you’re right, Clarice,” he said turning around. “I really do.”

“And when have I been wrong?” she teased.

Neville could not help but smile.

“Come Neville. It’s time.”

Neville followed Clarice from the room and down the hall a few doors to another large bedroom. They entered and saw that the others were waiting for them, or rather for Neville. Harry and Hermione were there



dressed in regular clothes as was Augusta Longbottom. Luna Lovegood was also there, dressed in black just like Neville. She had volunteered to be part of the extraction team in part to say thanks and pay back her friends for saving her mother's life almost a year earlier.

Neville's plan was adopted because it was, without any doubt, the simplest and the one with the least chance for either failure or detection. Hermione had suggested that they cure the Longbottoms and then get them out of the Hospital somehow. The problem was that the cure was not exactly something that one could do in secret in the middle of a huge, open ward. The only way to pull that off would be to stun the Healers on the ward and seal the doors for up to a half an hour at the least. That would be noticed.

It was Neville who asked the "dumb" question. Did his parents need to be cured before they were taken from the hospital or could they be cured later in a safe and secure location? It turned out that there was no reason to cure them first. So Neville came up with his plan. The extraction team would have only two members, Neville and someone else – who would become Luna when it was finalized. They would wear black Defense Master's kit from head to toe, but that was only a back up precaution as they would disillusion themselves before shifting into the Ward. They would go late at night when the Ward was at minimal staff and, nearly invisible under the charm, they would shift right to Neville's parents' bedsides. Each would have a portkey that would transport the Longbottoms from their beds in St. Mungo's to the beds at Potter House. Neville chose two gold bracelets. Once it was on the wrist of the person, it would automatically activate within five seconds. Neville and Luna would shift back once it was certain that his parents were safely away.

"Hey Neville," Harry said. "ready?"

Neville nodded then he looked at his partner. "Luna?"

"Let's do this," she replied.

"Final kit," Neville said. Both he and Luna put on a pair of black gloves and then a black woolen ski mask.



“You two look scary,” Clarice said with a smirk.

“Hopefully, we won’t look like anything at all,” Neville replied. “Disillusion,” he said. As he did, he waived his hand over his head and felt the effect like cold water spreading from the top of his head down his body. He looked over to where Luna was and saw just a brief shimmer of light not unlike the effect of heat rising and causing the air to distort slightly.

“Excellent,” Harry said. “Shift on my mark in five, four, three, two...”

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 2nd, 1990 - ST. MUNGO'S, LONDON, U.K.

Healer Trainee Alice Patterson looked at her watch and sighed. It was not even midnight yet, meaning she had over six hours to go on this boring shift. She was beginning to regret telling the old goat to go stuff himself. True, what he said was both unprofessional and personally insulting, but he was in charge of the Trainee rotation and the result of her response was this shift. The night shift in the long term care ward was arguably the worst. Even though there were more than fifty patients, they were all in little or no condition to be a problem. The most exciting thing she could expect was to change an occasional bed pan.

Still, she tried to be conscientious in her boring job and made a round through the ward every hour. It also kept her from falling asleep, which was what she knew most people used this shift for. She did not want to be one of the Healers permanently assigned to this ward as it was usually the dumping ground for those who could not fit in anywhere else in the hospital either due to inability or personality issues. Well, she thought, in a way that’s why she was now on this shift. She had issues with her superior. Nothing ever happened on this ward, she thought as she picked up her book.

A flash of blue light from somewhere out on the Ward caught her attention. She looked up from her book in time to see another clear flash of blue. She knew what it could be, but could not understand how or why a portkey would have been activated. She noticed a



shimmer in the vicinity of where the flashes of light had been, but she blinked and when she focused again, the shimmer was gone.

Alice had been eleven years old and in her first year at Preston Academy when the last magical War had ended. As a Muggle Born, she had not even really known there was a war, certainly not before she started attending school. Even then little was said of it and she initially had thought the strange and scary stories were just that – stories. It was not until You-Know-Who had been defeated by of all things a baby that her classmates began to speak openly of the war that had ravaged their world. She had never truly known the fear and terror of those times. Had she known it, the blue flashes of light where they did not belong would have either scared the wits out of her or made her start shooting any and every hex she could think of into the Ward at whatever might be out there. But she was not scared or on her guard, merely curious.

She rose from her desk and walked towards where the light had been wondering what could have happened or whether the long and boring night shift was getting to her and playing tricks on her imagination, which her mother had always told her was “overactive.” She arrived at Beds 35 and 36. They looked unmade and very empty and Alice was certain there had been patients in them earlier when she made her last set of rounds. She could see the charts hanging from a hook at the end of the beds, a clear sign there was supposed to be a patient there. She looked at the first one: Alice Longbottom. Ironical, she thought, that this missing patient share her first name. “Dx: Curse Induced Persistent Catatonic State.” That meant the person was not up for a midnight stroll, much less capable of using a portkey. Two patients had seemingly disappeared into the thin air. Certainly more exciting than changing bedpans but ...

She noticed an envelope on the now vacant bed. Alice picked it up and opened it. Inside was a piece of parchment with letters on it, clearly looking like someone had cut the letters out of a newspaper or magazine and glued them to the parchment. She wondered what kind of witch or wizard – other than Muggle Borns – watched police shows on the telly. She read the note: “NoW EndS tHAt wHiCH wAs StaRteD.” The note made no sense to her at all, but clearly was



meant to mean something to someone. She quickly walked from the Ward in search of the Night Supervisor.

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 2nd, 1990 - POTTER HOUSE, LONDON, U.K.

Harry and the others waited in silence from the moment his five second count ended with "Now!" It was now up to Neville and Luna. Harry was confident in the plan itself, but a part of him, the part that remained behind while his friends went into harm's way, that part of him was worried. Every second had seemed an eternity to him. He knew he could not do everything, but that did not stop him from wishing he could if it meant that by doing so his friends remained safe. Harry had lived enough of his life without any friends to truly appreciate how special and irreplaceable his friends truly were.

Part of him was already itching to follow, just in case, when a blue light filled the room and the body of Alice Longbottom materialized on her designated bed. A couple of seconds later, Frank Longbottom's portkey delivered him to his bed and Clarice was up at their sides checking them over. At least the extraction was a success, Harry thought.

Seconds later, both Luna and Neville appeared, dropping their disillusionment charms.

"Any problems?" Hermione asked.

"None that I know of," Neville replied. "Went off as planned."

"Definitely easier than the fire," Luna said, "at least for me." She was referring to the day she needed to stay in the hospital recovering from magical exhaustion.

"Still," Neville added, "it certainly gets the heart pumping. Oh, and I added a twist."

"A twist?" Harry asked.



“A note.”

“What kind of note?”

Neville described the note he had left on his mother’s bed just before he shifted back to Potter House.

“Now ends that which was started?” Hermione asked repeating the message. “What’s that cryptic nonsense?”

“Confusion to our enemies,” Neville said with a smirk. “I felt something was needed to throw them off. Gran and I would be the most likely suspects, you know.”

“Still,” Harry began.

“Harry, they are my family. Until Dad’s better, I am technically acting Head. I felt the Authorities should have better things to do than look for Gran and me. After all, who knows what they might turn up searching for whomever wants to finish whatever it was that was started.”

“You’ve been hanging around Sirius too much,” Hermione said.

Neville shrugged. “Deception is a vital weapon.”

“And the twins,” Hermione added.

“I try to learn from the masters,” Neville said. It was clear he was feeling relieved that it was over and everything had worked as planned. “How are they, Clarice? Can we get to them?”

Clarice turned from the two Longbottoms. “They’re fine for now. They’re asleep and probably were when you sent them. I think we should wait until morning. You’ll need to be awake and alert and after your brief adventure, I would recommend a good night sleep.”

“But why not now?”



“Do you want to wake them?”

Neville shook his head.

“Well, they need to be awake for us to try and I would prefer that they wake on their own rather than be rudely awakened by another in their mindscape. A good night’s sleep would be good for all of us.”

Against his will, Neville yawned.

“In the morning, then,” Augusta said. “And Neville?”

“Yes Gran?”

“In case I forget, I’m proud of you.”

“Thanks.”

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 3rd, 1990 - ST. MUNGO’S, LONDON, U.K.

Rufus Scrimgeor had been the Head of the Auror Department, Department of Magical Law Enforcement for two years now. Guy Jacobs had been his predecessor and had taken over the head job not long after the War when the two most figured would take over, now that the job was not a de facto death sentence, had not been selected. Prior to Jacobs, the Head Auror’s life expectancy was about three months. No less than twenty-two had been killed by Death Eaters, many in their own homes and with their entire families wiped out. Needless to say, any really good Auror avoided that job like Dragon Pox. Only the ambitious or foolish had accepted the terminal position.

Guy was a dark horse. He was a very good investigative Auror but only average in combat skills and everyone had figured the job would most likely go to the best combat Auror of the bunch, Mad-eye Moody. But when the War had ended, Moody refused the position. He stayed on for another two years rounding up the remaining Death Eaters that could be caught and then retired. Did not even bother to wait for a



party. Just walked in, said “that’s it, I’m through,” and handed in his badge.

With Moody gone, the next best bet was Amelia Bones. She had been almost as ruthless as Moody, although everyone could agree she was also the better at Ministry politics. When Barty Crouch was forced out as Head of Magical Law Enforcement after it was learned that his son was a Death Eater, Amelia had been given that job leaving the Head Auror position still vacant. Thus, the best detective took the job. Guy was probably the right man for the job at the time, many thought. The office had to transform from a war footing to a peacetime police force. True, Aurors were the department within DMLE responsible for major crimes to include murder, but the shoot to kill mentality was no longer considered necessary and Guy had returned the office to its peacetime manner of operations.

Guy was, however, older and near retirement himself. Once he felt the office was where it needed to be he too retired and left it to his handpicked successor, Rufus. Rufus had been a good combat Auror in his day and had also developed a reputation as a thorough and meticulous investigator. He was determined that if his Office caught a perpetrator, the evidence against that person would be unassailable. Under his auspices, while the number of arrests had dropped off, almost every person arrested was now serving a lengthy sentence in Azkaban, a conviction rate Rufus was proud of.

Rufus was more than a little annoyed. In his tenure as Head he had never been called out to a potential crime scene, and certainly never in the middle of the night. Had it been a more junior Auror who made the call, Rufus would be cussing a storm. But the Auror in charge of the scene was among his best and most conscientious. Rufus wondered as he took the stairs up to the Fourth Floor what could have possessed Kingsley Shacklebolt to break with the unofficial protocol.

“Okay Kingsley,” he said when he reached a congregation of law enforcement personnel and some of the Hospital staff in the middle of the large Long Term Care Ward, “what’s all this then? Don’t see any bodies. Why are we here? More important, why am I here?”



“A most unusual case,” Kingsley said. “Night watch got the call from MLE who were first responders. They thought the staff here might have been imperioused or something and...”

“Yes, that explains our office, but not you or me.”

Kingsley nodded.

“Murder? Rape? Any sign of unforgivable?”

“Kidnapping, more like,” Kingsley said. “I believe that falls within our jurisdiction.”

Rufus nodded. “So?”

“Shortly before midnight, Healer-Trainee Patterson over there had just finished her rounds of this Ward and was at her desk when she saw a blue flash of light,” Kingsley said. “Two flashes, actually. She got up and came here,” Kingsley indicated to the two empty beds. “When she began her shift and when she made that last set of rounds, there were two patients in these beds. After the light, she found the patients had disappeared.”

“Portkey?”

“Her description is consistent.”

“Unforgivables?”

“No sign of any.”

“Why does this interest us? Me?”

“First of all, the patients were Alice and Frank Longbottom...”

“Oh Bloody Hell!” Two Aurors, Rufus thought. They were legends in the Corps both for their ability and, unfortunately, their fate; tortured



into insanity by some of the most vicious Death Eaters known and after You-Know-Who hand snuffed it.

“Residual signs of magic consistent with a targeted Portkey,” Kingsley continued.

“Through the Wards?”

Kingsley nodded. “The perp either knew the wards or knew how to bypass.”

“As in a portkey designed to pass through even more complex wards at destination,” Rufus nodded. “No simple task. How’d he get in? Targeted portkey as well?”

“No evidence of magical entry anywhere in this building except at the approved apparition point,” Kingsley said. “There were no known entries at or within three hours of the event, none of those who arrived within the past five days was even logged into this Ward as a visitor. Certainly no one in the last twelve hours. And Ms. Patterson did not see anyone enter this Ward at any point during her shift prior to the incident.”

“And yet they were still portkeyed away.” Rufus finished. “Wand signatures?”

“All accounted for,” Kingsley said. “Whoever did this was not using a wand at any point while they were here.”

“A real pro, then,” Rufus nodded.

“Not even the Death Eaters were that good, Rufus. Hit wizards, combat trained MLE, maybe some of the folks at the Portkey office, ‘cept they couldn’t have pulled this off and leave no trace...”

“You suspect an inside job?”



“Healers? Doubt it. Aside from trace portkey magic, so faint it cannot be tracked and with no recognizable or traceable signature, no evidence. They certainly can portkey casualties in, but out?”

“That and there would be a registered wand signature.” Rufus nodded. “We can file the magical trace for future...” his comment was cut off as Kingsley was shaking his head.

“The portkey trace is not a wand trace. Whoever made the portkey did so without a wand so far as we can tell.”

“But that’s impossible!”

“Nevertheless...”

“Anything else?”

“Just this,” Kingsley said handing Rufus a piece of parchment. “It was found on one of the victim’s beds.”

Rufus looked at it. “Magical trace on the sticking charm?”

“No charm. I believe those letters are stuck to the parchment by Muggle means. Something called ‘glue,’ I think.”

“Fingerprints?”

“Nothing.”

“Bugger! We got a real pro here!”

“So it would seem.”

“Thoughts on the meaning of this note?”

“Could be Death Eaters coming to finish what they started in ’81,” Kingsley said stating the obvious, “but we have nothing to indicate any of them were this sophisticated. They did not hide their tracks.”



“Have you contacted the next of kin?”

“No one answers, Sir.”

“You do realize that these are the last members of the direct line of an Ancient and Noble House, don’t you?”

Kingsley nodded.

“House Longbottom in any feuds?”

“Not that we are aware, Sir.”

“But, it cannot be ruled out, can it?”

“No Sir.”

“So it looks like someone is trying to end that line then?”

“That is an unfortunate possibility, but it could be a coincidence. Not enough evidence.”

Rufus nodded. “Well, I suppose it’s good that these two were old news. Last thing we need is the press attention – or that of the Wizengamot.”

“Er...”

“What?”

“There were orders, Sir.”

“What kind of orders?”

“Um ... it seems the Head Healer has orders to inform the Chief Warlock in any change in the Longbottoms’ condition.”



“What would Dumbledore care about a couple of zombies?”

Kingsley shrugged. “Nevertheless, I would have to say that their vanishing into thin air constitutes a change in their condition, wouldn’t you?”

“Has he informed Dumbledore yet?”

“No Sir. We haven’t let him. Crime scene and all that.”

Rufus nodded. “I want you there when he does. I want to know what that secretive old goat’s interest is.”

“And what should I tell said secretive old goat?”

“What’s your gut tell you, Kingsley?”

“That the Longbottoms are probably in an unmarked grave somewhere as we speak.”

Rufus nodded in agreement.

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 3rd, 1990 - HOGWARTS SCHOOL OF WITCHCRAFT AND WIZARDRY, SCOTLAND, U.K.

Albus Dumbledore sat in his office looking at the short letter on the desk in front of him. He so loved it when a plan came together. And this was a plan that was now almost nine years in the making; a plan that would rid the world of Voldemort once and for all.

Unlike most everyone else in Britain, Dumbledore did not believe Voldemort was truly dead. While the events of that Halloween night were a bit vague, he remembered the important details. Most notably, the body of the man once known as Tom Riddle was not at that place. Even in the magical world, bodies did not just disappear. True, it could have been transfigured or something, but he recalled no sign of magic after a flurry of killing curses that killed the young couple in the home that night. No, something else happened. There was some magic signature that suggested a third killing curse was cast and that



it hit Voldemort. There were signs on what remained of the evil wizard's robes. Odd that was all that remained of the most feared wizard in centuries.

There was more to what happened that night and Dumbledore knew it. But he could not remember. Then again, perhaps now that things were coming together it was not necessary. He could not even remember the names of the couple that had become the last of Voldemort's poor victims. It did not matter. Thousands died in that War. Surely no one could remember all of those names. But what he could remember was no sign of a body or that there had been one. Even at that time, Dumbledore suspected Voldemort had somehow survived. He was convinced, however, that the physical being that was Voldemort no longer existed. It was possible, given the Dark Magic and rituals Voldemort was believed to have known, done and dabbled in, that he was no longer truly human when he met that fate.

Dumbledore specifically suspected a horcrux was involved. That would explain a lot of Voldemort's claims and possibly the absence of a body. It also meant that Voldemort's soul had not passed on and could not so long as the horcrux survived. And that meant Voldemort could return somehow.

From that day, Dumbledore had strove to prevent that return or, if it could not be prevented, make sure the return occurred in such a fashion and at such a time that Voldemort could be dealt with once and for all time. The plan was so simple in concept: lure Voldemort's soul, spirit, whatever, into a trap; a cage which could hold the evil spirit until it could safely be destroyed. The trick was always in the details. The first problem was that if one wanted to lure prey into a trap, it helped if one both knew where the prey was and had the right bait.

Finding his prey had taken years. For the first few years after Voldemort disappeared, there had been no sign of whatever was left of him. Dumbledore was convinced that the evil spirit had left Britain altogether. He was not surprised. As arrogant as Tom Riddle was, the man knew that were he to remain in Britain Dumbledore would find him. But the world was a big place and the spirit could be anywhere. Still, there would be signs and as Chief Mugwump of the I.C.W.,



Dumbledore had access to information and sources that could reveal the signs.

A few years ago, the signs began pointing to Albania. A forest region was reputed to have “gone dark.” This was not a normal occurrence, although alone it was not conclusive proof of anything except an overly liberal attitude regarding the Statute of Secrecy in general and the regulation of dark magical creatures on the part of the Albanian magical government. Then again, Albania was secretive and generally played by its own rules whenever it could. However, Dumbledore soon learned of a rumor of a huge, poisonous snake stalking that newly dark forest. Riddle was said to have a magically enlarged viper as a familiar; one that would dwarf the King Cobras of India, the largest poisonous snakes in the natural world. While this did not conclusively prove Voldemort had settled in Albania, it was extremely suggestive; enough so that Dumbledore had now turned his attention to that tiny country on the Adriatic.

Dumbledore then needed his bait. He needed to lure Voldemort not only out of hiding but to Hogwarts itself where he could be trapped. He needed something so enticing that the evil wizard could not pass on it. He also needed some vessel or means for that spirit to make the journey, preferably in a manner that could easily be trapped as well as a means for Voldemort to catch wind of the bait. The bait was the easy part. The one thing Voldemort coveted above all was immortality. Thus the bait would be that chance.

Immortality had been a goal of magic for millennia. The horcrux was an attempt at achieving such goal; and attempt that was arguably a failure. True, the user of such a vile magical art did not completely die and could return, but it was not eternal life rather it was merely an absence of final demise. The body could still die in any number of ways, including advanced age. True immortality was the inability of the body to die as well such that one was alive and in corporeal form seemingly forever.

It was well known throughout the Wizarding World that Albus Dumbledore had been friends with a man named Nicholas Flamel and his wife Perenelle. Flamel had been born in 1323 in France. He was a wizard and what was not generally known was that he was a



Muggle Born. After attending school for wizards on the continent, he apprenticed as a potions maker receiving his Mastery in 1344 and opening an apothecary shop in Lyons where he met his wife, a Muggle Born witch. Whether by accident, as was often the case, or the design of his later recognized genius, Flamel invented a potion that could cure the Black Death, at least in magical folk. While the Plague that swept Europe beginning in 1346 claimed people without regard to wealth or magical status, the magical folk fared better than their non-magical neighbors largely due to Flamel's potions. Needless to say, the young Flamel's came out of the Plague years quite wealthy.

Flamel had retired for the most part at the ripe old age of twenty-six and he then began an exhaustive study of the ancient art of alchemy. This art was an offshoot of potions making and one magical art that was actually practiced, studied and well documented throughout the non-magical world and had been for almost two thousand years. The Ancient Greeks had surmised that it was possible to create through alchemy a substance of immense potential. (They were not the only ones as the Chinese reached a similar conclusion around the same time.) This substance, which the Greeks called the Philosopher's Stone, was said to be a critical component in an elixir that would grant the user true immortality. It also could be used to turn any base metal into gold, thereby allowing the immortal ample wealth as well. For almost two thousand years, alchemists tried to discover the "Stone." They created many interesting substances, not in the least of which were Greek Fire and gunpowder, but the Stone eluded them. Until Nicholas Flamel, that is.

Dumbledore had met Flamel around 1890 while touring France on holiday. At the time, Nicholas and his wife were living in Burgandy and running a small yet successful vineyard. They lived under the name Pierre and Constance DeMoray. Dumbeldore had been actually invited to visit as the Flamel's considered him the leading magical academic of his age and about once every hundred years or so the couple liked to engage in correspondence with such personages. Dumbledore learned that the couple had, since discovering the stone, lived until Penerelle was ninety and then faked their deaths, relocating to another part of Europe and emerging under a new name as a mid-twenty year old couple. They raised their next



family, enjoyed their next life and when old and gray again, faked their deaths and started over.

When Dumbledore met them, the Flamels were in their mid forties, about mid way through their sixty-fifth incarnation. For about forty years, they were friends of Albus Dumbledore before disappearing again on their next adventure. Dumbeldore had never seen the legendary Stone, but it was widely believed that he had. The bait was based upon this belief. He would let Voldemort know that Nicholas had entrusted the Stone to his safe keeping. Of course, anyone who had actually known the Flamels as Dumbeldore had would know that was a lie. Why would the Flamels, with over five hundred years of magical experience each, entrust such a priceless and powerful thing to a mere child by their standards? But only Dumbledore knew this.

For some reason that escaped him, Dumbledore knew he had to have his trap baited by the fall of 1991. Sometime thereafter, Voldemort had to be lured into the trap. That small problem had caused him fits for years until the past spring.

Quirinus Quirrell had been a professor at Hogwarts for about a decade. While he had been a brilliant student, as an academic he was merely passable. He had taught Muggle Studies, mainly because all the “hard” magical courses had been staffed when he hired on. It was known that both he and Professor Snape desired the posting as Defense Against the Dark Arts teacher. Deep down, Dumbledore trusted neither with the job. Snape clearly had the experience, but as a former Death Eater the man might be tempted. Quirrell lacked any experience in that field. He had worked training trolls before Hogwarts which was part of the Regulation and Control of Magical Creatures, not dealing with Dark Arts. But, the man was eager to give it a try.

For almost thirty years, the position of Defense Against the Dark Arts had been a pain in the old Headmaster’s neck. No professor since 1960 had managed to stay in the post more than three terms. There were many reasons why, but it was a revolving door and Dumbledore had all but given up trying to fix it.

Last spring, Quirrell announced he would like to take a year off to study about the Dark Arts and travel Europe in search of knowledge



so that he might be considered for the post on some future occasion. That had given Dumbledore the rest of his plan. He would send Quirrell to Albania with knowledge of the Philosopher's Stone to tempt Voldemort out of hiding and into his trap which he was building deep beneath Hogwarts castle. Dumbledore knew that if Voldemort took the bait, it would probably mean the death of Quirrell in the end, but one death against the Greater Good was a small price to pay.

He smiled as he read his letter from Bamir, an acquaintance with the Albanian Ministry of Magic. Bamir had been asked to keep an eye out for Quirrell and then direct the man into the new Dark Forest. The letter had stated that Quirrell was in fact in Albania and had taken an interest in their Dark Forest and was already well along in preparing an expedition into its depths. By this time next year, Dumbledore thought, Voldemort will be here trying to find his way through the defenses guarding "the Stone." He smiled again and opened the desk drawer wherein lay a very large but otherwise quite ordinary amethyst. Everyone assumed the Stone was a stone so why not use one? The truth was only Flamel really knew what form the "Stone" really was. It could be anything or nothing at all. But the desperate man will believe a convenient lie, and therein lay the key to the trap.

Dumbledore was about to turn his attention to the real pressing problem – that damnable Time Chamber. It still existed and would probably see use again unless he could get the laws changed. As much chaos as his revelations regarding the sexual exploits of those who now claimed to be paradigms of pureblood virtue had caused a few months ago, the oligarchy that was the Wizengamot had remained wholly ineffective in dealing with the issue. Dumbledore wanted it to end and only Voldemort was a higher priority.

Just as he decided to turn to this vexing issue, a loud knock at the door interrupted his thoughts.

"Enter," he said, slipping into his gentle, grandfatherly persona.

A tall, dark skinned man entered his office.

"Ah! Kingsley. To what do I owe the honor of your presence?"



“Professor Dumbledore,” Kingsley replied formally. “It is about the Longbottoms.”

“Indeed? Has something happened to Augusta or her grandchild?”

“We don’t know, Sir. What we do know is that Alice and Frank are missing.”

“Missing?” Albus replied in surprise. “Last I checked they were in long term care. Did they improve?”

“They were still there, condition unchanged as of last night, Sir. But now, they are missing.” Kingsley then explained everything about the mysterious disappearance.

Dumbledore remembered something. “They must be found,” he said far more forcefully than was normal for him. “They have information – vital information – locked away in those heads of theirs. Information that we cannot have afford fall into the wrong hands.”

“Sir,” Kingsley said, “their condition precludes...”

“And we assume that their condition remains as it was? What if it has not? No. They must be found! Dead or alive they must be found!”

“We cannot even say for certain where they are or even if they are alive...”

“A small inconvenience in light of the current situation! Find them! This is of vital concern to our government.”

“The Ministry presumes they are dead, along with Augusta and the lad. Most likely a line feud we were unaware of...”

“Let’s hope that is the case, Kingsley. But I doubt it! Based upon what you told me someone went to great trouble to remove those two shells – for lack of a better word – from St. Mungo’s. An assassin



would have just killed them, don't you think? No, something else is happening. Something Dark. Something that could be ill for us all. Whoever is behind this is not someone we can afford to take lightly! Not even Voldemort at the height of his powers had such audacity! They want something! Whoever wrote that note wants something and it is in our collective best interest to see to it they FAIL! Find them!"

"Yes Sir!"

"It is the wish of the Wizengamot that they are found."

"Understood Sir." Kingsley knew what this meant. If the Ministry refused the Chief Warlock on this, there would be a new Minister for Magic within the month, and probably a few new Department Heads. "Should we alert the press?"

Dumbledore thought for a moment. "No. Let our new adversaries think they've succeeded. They will become confident, arrogant and invariably make a mistake."

"Yes Sir." Kingsley left for the Ministry to pass on the concerns of the Chief Warlock.

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 3rd, 1990 - POTTER HOUSE, LONDON, U.K.

Alice Longbottom sat on a small couch in one of the Ground Floor Parlors of her quite overly large prison. She still had trouble believing she was truly imprisoned in her own mind for she was unaware of any magic that could achieve such a result. Still, it was the only explanation that fit the facts as she had seen them. For ages it had just been her in this place. Well, her and a couple of House Elves she had never seen before. For ages she felt she was a prisoner. Then one day some time ago a boy had come to her prison cell – if one could call it that. He said it was 1989 and he was Harry Potter. Were it not for the fact she had not seen or heard from another human being in so long, she would have been mean to the lad. He was, after all, most likely an interrogator or something. Yet, starved of any human contact, she humored the lad.



Then she had met her son. She was forced to realize that she was either being subjected to the cruelest torture imaginable, or that the boys were telling her the truth, that all of this was in her own mind, except for them. She so wanted to believe them and so hoped they were real and all of this was fake. Still, it was a lot to take on, even over time. The part of her that hoped it was real did win out to some extent, particularly as Neville had kept his promise to visit her as often as he could. But the logical side of her continued to harbor doubts just in case she really was losing it once and for all. It would be easier to not believe than to believe and find it was all a horrible lie. Still, she so looked forward to his visits.

He said he also visited his father this way, but admitted he preferred visiting her. Frank had given into his logical side and was being stubborn, as usual. Every time this poor boy visited him, Frank tried to trick the lad into revealing the truth. The problem was, the boy had told her, the truth Frank believed was the lie and the lie he hoped to reveal was the truth. The boy merely wanted to get to know his parents, and Frank seemed to fight him at every turn. This Neville had admitted he could understand why, but surely a visit – any visit – was better than what they had before.

Alice admitted as much to herself. If this was a lie, it could be far worse. She did look forward to his visits. Still, if this was real then it must be so hard for the boy. To have and yet not have his parents in his life? A part of her felt sorry for this Neville and hoped for his sake that he was as real as he said and one day she could leave this fantasy and become the mother she was supposed to be. She often asked him when that day would be and all we would say is when they were ready. It was infuriating, and reinforced her view that maybe this was truly all in her head, but the lad seemed so hopeful it was almost infectious.

She so hoped he would visit her today, even if he was not real.

Her reflections were interrupted by a knock on the door. She smiled and looked up from the book she was reading. True, she had read the book before. Every book in this place she had read before she



had been sent here and several times since. Still, there really was nothing else to do, unless this Neville stopped by for a visit.

She looked up and saw that it was not Neville in the door. It was a blonde haired girl about eight or nine, she thought. The girl smiled at her and slowly entered the parlor.

“Mrs. Longbottom?” the girl asked.

Alice nodded.

“Oh goodie! It worked! Nev will be so pleased!” the girl gushed.

“And who are you?”

The girl blushed slightly. “I’m so sorry,” she said. “I’m sure my Mum would die of embarrassment. Manners. I’m one of Neville’s friends, Luna Lovegood...”

“He has spoken about you. You’re Xeno and Jasmine’s daughter?”

Luna nodded.

“They had only just married when Frank and I went into hiding. We never knew... Neville thinks a lot of you, you know? Says you’re nice and smart as well.”

“Yes. Neville is sweet and considerate. But don’t let that fool you. He’s also quite strong and brave as well. He helped save my Mum’s life, and mine, and as it turned out my baby brother and sister and...”

“Excuse me? He did what?”

“Oh, well they knew something bad would happen to my Mum and told me and told me to tell them if it did and it did and I did. There was an explosion and fire and I told them, but had to wait for them to come, but had to save my Mum ‘cause the fire would get her if I didn’t and it very nearly did. I passed out before they saved us, but Neville, Harry and Hermione got my Mum and I out of there and Clarice put



Mum back to rights and we found out then Mum was expecting and ...”

Alice was completely lost.

“I am sorry,” Luna said. “Lousy telling. Nervous I guess and excited that it’s really working. I can get either chatty or go completely silent. Guess you got me chatty.”

Alice nodded. She almost laughed but suppressed it figuring it was rude. “Why are you here?” she asked after a pause.

“We’re going to try and get you and Mr. Longbottom out today,” Luna said.

“You’re what?”

“Trying to rescue you,” another voice said.

Alice looked up and saw another girl had entered her “parlor.”

“Hermione Granger,” the girl said.

“Neville’s mentioned you too,” Alice replied. “Says you live with my godson and his sister, but I don’t recall your surname.”

Hermione nodded. “I was adopted as a baby,” she said. “My parents were killed in the War and the Grangers raised me. You may not remember my Mum and Dad, but you know my Great-grandmother.”

“I do?”

“Minerva McGonagall.”

Alice gasped. “This cannot be real. I’m losing it for certain!”

“You’re not losing it, Mum,” another voice said. Alice looked up and saw that Neville had joined them along with the boy she had met the



first time – Harry. “This proves that the ritual worked,” Neville said with a smile.

“Ritual?” Alice asked in shock.

“We performed a ritual,” Hermione said. “When we first contacted you here, well, the spell that was cast upon you would allow one person not related to you to enter and one blood relation and that’s it. That’s how Harry was able to come to see you and why Neville has. The ritual broke down the artificial occlumency shield and it is now possible for anyone skilled in legilimancy to enter; at least until you leave this mindscape.”

“You’re telling me the four of you can do legilimancy?”

Hermione nodded.

“But that’s impossible! You’re only children!”

“Mum,” Neville said, “either this is real, it is possible and we can get you back, or you can believe it’s not real and we cannot help you or Dad. Which do you want?”

“I want it to be real,” Alice said softly.

“Then please come with us,” Neville said. “We need your help. I need your help. Dad’s being stubborn.”

“But I can’t do legilimancy.”

“You won’t have to,” Neville said. “If you trust me, I can lead you to him. But you must leave here first. Come mother?”

Alice nodded. She was too confused to answer. Deep down she hoped all of this was very real. She rose from her seat and soon followed her son and his friends out the door into the main hall. They turned and headed to where a front door should be, where one had never been in all the time she had been stuck here. Yet there was



one there now and it was open and there seemed to be an outside beyond it. Alice stopped.

“Come mother. It’s a lovely day outside,” Neville said.

Alice nodded and followed the four children. They passed through the door and she hesitated for a moment. She had not passed beyond this point since she had been trapped here and... Carefully she stepped through the door and into the sunlight beyond it. She turned and saw no sign of a door behind her, just a large open field amidst rolling hills.

“Where did it go?” she asked in surprise.

“It’s gone forever, Mum. The spell that had held you captured is gone. But, now comes the hard part.”

“Hard part?”

“This is as far as we can bring you,” Neville said. “We are free of the mindscape, and have entered what could best be called your dreamscape. This is your true mind, not the one created for you. But, we are still in your mind. For you to come all the way back to us, you have to accept that and want to wake up and rejoin us in our world. You have to want to come home.”

“What if I can’t?”

“It is not a question of what you can and cannot do, Mum. It is now only a question of what you want to do. Right now, the real you is asleep. All you need to do now is wake up. You have a life ahead of you and it’s time to wake up...”

Before Alice could reply, she watched in horror as Neville and the others faded away. Far in the distance, as if from another reality she could still hear his voice. It seemed to be pleading with her.

“Please wake up, Mum,” it said, “I need you.”



Alice slowly opened her eyes. The fields were gone and she was lying in a bed somewhere. Her vision was burry, but she could see people were around her.

“Mum?” her son’s voice asked.

“Is this real?” she asked in return, surprised at how hoarse her voice was.

“Do you want me to pinch you?” Neville’s voice asked in reply.

“Ouch!” Alice gasped. “Neville Longbottom!”

“Wasn’t me, Mum! I swear!”

“Damn it Sirius,” another voice said. Alice could swear it was Augusta Longbottom.

“Augusta?” Alice croaked. “Sirius? Not Sirius Black! I mean Neville told me he was sent to prison for something he didn’t do but please don’t say my son hangs around with the scoundrel.”

“Okay, I won’t,” Sirius replied. “Welcome back, Alice.”

“Where’s my Neville?” she asked. Soon she felt a pair of arms embracing her.

“Right here, Mum.”

Alice knew this was real. She knew she was back.

“Right then,” Augusta’s voice said. “Now let’s see about that lay about of a son of mine!”

“This is just like where I was,” Alice said standing in another entrance hall.



“Rather the same,” Neville replied. “We think it’s modeled on a real place or at least one that existed when the Mind Trap was invented.”

Alice nodded. She had held Neville’s hand when they performed the ritual to unlock her husband’s mind trap. She knew that the real Alice was still lying in a bed, too weak to stand, but the hand holding allowed her mind to follow her amazing son here. Augusta was with them as well having travelled in holding Harry’s hand. The two girls were nowhere to be seen.

“Where are the others,” Augusta said.

“Trying to reason with Mr. Longbottom,” Harry replied.

“He refuses to leave his room,” Neville added.

“We’ll just see about that! Where is he? If he thinks he can while the way the hours like some no account Lord, he’s got another thing coming!”

“This way Gran,” Neville said. “Up the stairs.

Alice followed the others up a grand flight of stairs and soon could hear her husband’s voice in the distance.

“If you think I am going to believe this rubbish,” the voice ranted. “This is just a Death Eater trap! You’re trying to trick me!”

They followed the voice to an open door and walked in. Alice saw her husband yelling at the two girls who had helped her come back and saw red.

“Frank Longbottom,” she screamed, “how dare you yell at those girls!”

“A-Alice?” Frank began.



“And here I thought I raised you properly!” Augusta jumped in. “Well, at least your son turned out right!”

“Mother?”

“If you think I spent the last nine years making sure you had a son you would be proud of when you came back just to find that you wanted to waste your life in this fantasy...”

Frank Longbottom opened his eyes. He was no longer in the woodlands that had replaced the Manor where he had spent the last several years of his existence. He was in another room, on a bed, lying on his side and the first thing he saw was his wife lying next to him looking into his eyes. She looked terrible, as if she had been ill for ages. He hoped he looked better than that but if the others had been truthful, he'd be lucky if he only looked that bad.

“Alice?” he asked in a gravelly voice.

She nodded. To Frank, she had never looked so beautiful.



## CHAPTER FIFTY-TWO: THE REAL DUMBLEDORE

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 19th, 1990 – HOGWARTS SCHOOL OF WITCHCRAFT AND WIZARDRY, SCOTLAND, U.K.

“He’s barmy, I’m telling you,” the witch said. Her name was Elmira Chastain and she was barely three weeks into her first term as Professor of Defense Against the Dark Arts. “Thought he was off when I was but a lass here, but he’s totally ‘round the twist.” She looked at the rest of the faculty for some agreement. True, she was new here, but she believed she had a right to be concerned about the Headmaster of the School who was once again “fashionably late” to the faculty meeting he had called.

“No more than usual,” Pomona Sprout replied.

“You mean he’s always like this?”

“Great man ‘as loads on ‘is mind,” Rubeus Hagrid said. “Always ‘as.” Technically, Hagrid was not on faculty. He was the gamekeeper for the school. Yet, having been on staff for almost fifty years, he was the longest tenured staff member at the school aside from Silvanus Kettleburn, who taught Care of Magical Creatures; Professor Binns, who was a ghost and had been for close to two hundred years and the Headmaster himself. “Wha’ wi’ all tha’s ‘appened las’ few years, you’d be a bit barmy yerself if’n yer ‘im.”

“Good morning,” the voice of Albus Dumbledore called out as he entered the staff room.

Whether he was barmy or not, Minerva could see he was looking very tired. He had not looked this bad even during the War. Clearly, the stress of everything that seemed to be happening was affecting the man. This could make her job easier, she thought. “Are you okay, Albus?”

The man sighed as he sat in a chair. “It would seem my other duties are taking more of my time than I would like for less result,” he replied. “I must apologize if I seem distracted. Now then, first item of business



I should suppose is next year's class?"

Minerva nodded.

"How large?"

"Forty-one," she replied.

"So few?" another asked. "This year's crop was only fifty and there're less?"

"It was, I fear, the darkest time during that War," Dumbledore replied. "People were cautious."

"Or left the country," Pomona added.

"Regardless, it is as anticipated. I do regret it will be the smallest class at Hogwarts since the time of the last Goblin War. Still, we will make do and see to it they receive the high standard of education that we provide all our students. How many this month, Minerva?"

"Three turn eleven this month," Minerva replied. "Letters have been sent to two raised in our world and the third is a Muggle Born."

"Any names we should know?"

"Nothing of note, Albus," Minerva said. That was not true. Luna Lovegood was one of the three and as the daughter of an Ancient and Noble House, her name would be of interest to the Headmaster. She was also born in September 1980, about three weeks too late to have been offered a letter for next year under ordinary circumstances and Albus might well pick up on that. It was best he learned of the departure from tradition later, given as he had yet to take any specific interest in the composition of next year's entering class.

In reality, had Minerva merely sent out the letters that corresponded to the names in the registry book for entering year 1991, there would only be thirty-nine students starting out. Luna and Clarice made it



forty-one. Minerva was not about to separate Harry, Hermione and Clarice (and privately hoped the Sorting Hat would not separate them as well). As for Luna, first of all as she already had her O.W.L.s, N.E.W.T.s and would have at least two Masteries by next fall, she could easily handle whatever course work there was. But more important, as Luna, Hermione and Harry were the magical heirs of all four Founders, Minerva thought it was best to keep them together. Voldemort was still out there somewhere, she knew. The last time, he had viciously targeted the Founders Lines that he knew of for termination – including her own family.

And that meant there were two September “Children of Interest” had Minerva decided not to play ignorant. Hermione would be another as she was both descended from one of the oldest lines of witches in Britain (being Minerva’s Great-granddaughter) and the magical heir of Rowena Ravenclaw. However, unlike Luna, whose importance came from her name (Lovegood), Hermione’s was not readily apparent simply by looking at the student list. The list classified her as a Muggle Born. This, of course, was not true. But Minerva knew why it was so.

The Hall of Records accurately recorded both all magical births in a year, identifying the true birth parents, as well as all births from any magical parent. Thus, if the class lists were truly tied to the births registered in the Hall, it would include Squibs. Long ago, the school lists were created using a different kind of magic. A child’s name would not appear on the list at birth, rather it would appear upon detection of the child’s magic – almost always in the form of an outburst of accidental magic. When that happened, the list provided the child’s name, the name of the “parents” with whom she lived and their current address, which was updated whenever said child moved. While few knew, it was the only time a child’s magic was actually detected as the system detected some kind of change in the total magical output of the country and located it. Once that change occurred, the system was bind to further outbursts from the same known magical potential, or some such. Minerva did not fully understand the “mechanics” of it. She did, however, understand the effect. Hermione’s first “outburst” occurred when she was about eight months old and long after she was the Granger’s adopted child. Since



she lived in the Muggle World and with Muggle parents, she was a Muggle Born in the eyes of those records.

“And the third one? The Muggle Born? When are you planning your visit?” Albus asked.

“Today is her eleventh birthday,” Minerva said. “I was planning to pop around this evening.” She would have anyway. She had never missed Hermione’s birthday and was hoping Dumbledore had not noticed the fact that she always took some time off each September nineteenth.

“Capital,” Dumbledore said with a brief twinkle in his eye. “Now, we were unprepared last year for the full fallout from the Time Changer revelations...”

Many in the room quietly groaned.

“... but, despite my inability to sway the Wizengamot, I believe there are measures we can implement both within the law and within our existing rules that should see a reduction in the use of the chamber this year.”

“Measures that will fall more upon my House than any other,” Severus Snape the Head of Slytherin House grumbled.

“Alas, it is your House that is a greater problem in this regard than any of the others. A reduction across the board would be nice, but a significant reduction in the carnal activities within your House should have a positive effect. However, I do not expect you to shoulder the entire burden, Severus...”

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 19th, 1990 – POTTER HOUSE, LONDON, U.K.

More than two weeks had passed since the Longbottoms had been portkeyed away from St. Mungo’s and rescued from their Mindscapes. Still, for both of them recovery seemed to be a long way in the future. They had been bedridden for almost nine years and considering the



high quality of care in the Long Term Care Ward, it was actually a near miracle they were alive at all. Now that their minds were restored, however, their bodies had to recover from years of immobility and neglect. Even with magic, this would take time. They were only just beginning to learn to use their arms again – or at least have them do something close to what their minds wanted. They were only beginning to eat, and even then it was baby mush as they were still learning to use their jaw muscles and those were weak from idleness. About the only thing they could do, and even then not for long, was talk. Well, they could listen too. And they had both done a lot of that over the days.

The previous Saturday had been a big day for them in this new life. It was the first day they had left their beds or their bedroom for that matter. They had both been strapped gently into wheelchairs and were wheeled out onto a balcony that overlooked Hyde Park in London. The weather was sunny and cool and their Healer had suggested they should spend some time in the fresh air. Their chairs were parked side by side and the elf who served as their nurse – named Dasha and part of the Longbottom House staff that had moved to London with Neville and Augusta – made sure they were wrapped in blankets and that they were holding each other's hands. They were still incapable of truly doing so without help. Still, for the both of them it was a wonderful day and the only complaint either had was their son was not around. They knew he spent three days a week somewhere else, but really had not asked where or why yet. He did spend hours with them. He read them books, told them stories about a faraway country, fed them or just sat with them. He told them for now they had to get better and later, when they were ready, he would tell them about his life.

They were both anxious to learn of what they had missed. They both could tell their son was not what they had expected in many ways, but neither knew why. He seemed far more mature than he should be at this age. Then again, so did the other children they saw at the house. The truth was, they still did not know exactly where they were. What they did know and what did make them happy was that this was truly real. They were truly together and their son was truly with them. Alice, of course, told Frank that it really should be they who were taking care of him (it took her a while to say this). Frank could only



barely nod in agreement but replied: "Better this than before." As bad as things might have seemed being near invalids, that statement was true for they both knew their current condition was not permanent. Still, for two people who had lived very active lives, it was incredibly annoying.

On this Wednesday morning, it was again warm and sunny out and they again found themselves on the balcony of the large house where they were staying. They were left alone together for a time to enjoy the sun.

"Where'd y' think we are?" Frank asked.

"Donno," Alice replied. "Not certain."

"Guess?"

Alice nodded. "Potter House? James. Lily. Wedding?"

"London," Frank nodded. "Could be. Wonder why?"

"Because this is the best place for you, for now," a voice answered and they saw they had been joined by Frank's mother Augusta. "You might not believe I could say that," she continued. "But I fear it is true. The War is both over and still ongoing. There are evil plans afoot as we speak 'though few know of them and even fewer know them. For better or worse, we find ourselves here on an island amidst a gathering of storms."

Does he know?" Frank asked.

"Who?"

"D-Dumbledore?"

"You need not worry about him anymore, my Son. You are safe from him here."

"I don't understand..."



Augusta knew that back during the War Frank and Alice had been among Dumbledore's most loyal supporters. Others had questioned the man's true motives, mostly behind his back. Frank and Alice never had. Then again, as compared to some of the others, they never had reason to question. While others took time in deciding whether to join the Order of the Phoenix, Alice and Frank had not hesitated. They believed the Order was the only organization trying to stop Voldemort and Dumbledore the only leader of consequence who saw Voldemort as a threat. Even James and Lily Potter had spent at least a few days thinking about it.

Augusta too had thought Dumbledore was the only sane voice at that time. But she began to have her doubts not long after Neville was born. She shared those doubts with her son and daughter-in-law, but they thought she was just a little paranoid. However, now she knew even she had been far too trusting. Voldemort had to be destroyed; that much had not changed. But Augusta now believed that a victory under Dumbledore was only a slightly better outcome than total defeat. If her grandson was to have the life and future he deserved one day, Dumbledore could not be a factor. Augusta knew that the first priority for her son and daughter-in-law was to break their faith in Dumbledore.

She then began to tell them of their son's life. Before he was eight, it was not as pleasant as she would have hoped. He did not have any friends. Augusta wanted him to, but she knew few people who had any children anywhere near Neville's age and after what had happened to his parents, was by her own admission overly protective. Both her family and her husband's did not have any children near Neville's age either. Then there was the concern she and others in the family had that he might be a squib. Until he was eight, Augusta had no reason not to believe that was a possibility as the boy had never once displayed any accidental magic. It was possible he had, but she was unaware of it. The Longbottoms were aware how well magical children tended to treat squibs and could understand her concerns.

Then, when Neville was eight, three children entered his life and everything changed. Those children were Harry Potter, his younger



sister Clarice Jameson and their friend and housemate Hermione Granger. Alice and Frank were unaware that Harry had a sister and so, they found out, was most all of the wizarding world. They had been deliberately separated as babies by none other than Albus Dumbledore. Harry had been sent to live with his mother's sister and Clarice had been set up for adoption.

“But that's not what they wanted!” Alice said.

Augusta then began to tell of Dumbledore's strange fascination with at first both Harry and Neville and then Harry. Wasn't it odd, she said, that the only three people left alive who knew that Harry was not supposed to be placed with the Dursleys or separated from his sister – other than Dumbledore – all met such odd fates? Sirius Black was locked away in prison without a trial for it turned out crimes he did not commit; the only person to suffer that fate in over three hundred years. Every Death Eater ever caught got a trial. Sirius did not. Then there was the attack on Alice and Frank. Only Augusta and Dumbledore knew where they were living. Even with the Wards down, there was no realistic way for anyone to find them unless either they or Augusta or Dumbledore told someone. Yet within a day, four Death Eaters show up and Frank and Alice were imprisoned in their minds. As Augusta had said nothing, this left only one person who could have tipped off the attackers: Dumbledore.

And why would Dumbledore want the Longbottoms out of the way? Because, like Sirius Black, they knew they were supposed to get custody of Harry (and Clarice) should anything happen to the Potters and would question Dumbledore's authority in defying the clear intent of the Potter Will. Dumbledore wanted Harry sent to his vile relatives, who tortured the poor boy for years. And yes, he knew. The foul excuses for humanity beat the poor boy almost to death and it resulted in a very public investigation wherein Dumbledore admitted to placing Harry with those people, admitting knowing about the abuse at least in general, and the man still had the nerve to say that it was what he thought was best for the boy!

But Dumbledore no longer had the boy, the Grangers did. They sent Harry, his sister (and Augusta explained how Clarice came back into the family) and Hermione to a school in another country to learn



magic. The kids came back and taught others what they learned, including their new friend Neville. Neville went there the following summer. And oh what a school it is, August told them. Their son, who she thought might be a squib at one time, now had his O.W.L.s, N.E.W.T.s and his Defense Mastery, not to mention he completed non-magical school as well and would go on for his University degrees and more. The boy could do wandless magic and knew mind arts. He also had two animagus forms and was one of the better duelers in school. It was clear Augusta was proud of her grandson and that she despised Dumbledore who was publically on record as opposed to allowing any British child to receive an education in a foreign land.

Augusta went on to tell the Longbottoms about all of Neville's closet friends, all of whom had already been harmed in one way or another by their Leader of the Light. Hermione was descended from a long magical line, but had been raised by Muggles because she was born to underage parents. Dumbledore supposedly knew of the policy and knew that there were wizards and witches from distinguished lines who had lived or were living their lives as Muggle Borns. True, as Head of the Wizengamot Dumbledore had seen to the passage of some laws that supposedly helped Muggle Borns, but they were still for all practical purposes at the bottom of magical society. That was the fate this society would have in store for both Hermione and Harry's sister Clarice. Even though Clarice had a full brother the world would recognize as a half blood and heir apparent to an Ancient and Noble House, because Clarice was born in hiding and had not performed any accidental magic before she was adopted by a Muggle couple, in the eyes of Dumbledore's laws she was a Muggle Born. Finally there was Luna Lovegood. She had but one friend for a long time until Dumbledore decided that her friend should not have friends. How many lives had been ruined in the name of Dumbledore's Greater Good?

And what had Dumbledore really done as leader of the Light? True, he had been one of the first to both recognize Voldemort and the Death Eaters as a threat and urge the Ministry to take them seriously. But he had also opposed the laws that would have allowed Magical Law Enforcement to use lethal force against the Death Eaters. He had said that the damage to pureblood society that killing off many



lines far outweighed any short term benefit and, of course, the Wizengamot had followed his lead as many of them certainly had family members in Voldemort's ranks. He had hand picked every Minister for Magic since he became Chief Warlock save one. During the War, being Dumbledore's man and Minister for Magic meant two things: first, the person was a pacifist who would oppose violent methods against the Death Eaters and second, he or she was usually dead within a year. Only the current Minister was not a Dumbledore pick and that was only because Dumbledore was out of the country when her predecessor was assassinated and she was selected for the post. It was under her that the Aurors were finally allowed to use lethal force, a measure Dumbledore still opposed even though the Ministry was on the brink of defeat. In effect, whatever his Greater Good was, he had almost single handedly handed over Britain to Voldemort.

"And one other thing," Augusta said as she finished her rant about their so called leader of the Light, "Dumbledore is extremely concerned about what became of the two of you. He wants you back in St. Mungo's long term care where he believes you belong and wants whoever took you locked away for a long time. That means Neville. He's the one who brought you here. Magical Law Enforcement has made it top priority as he used his Chief Warlock status. I, for one - and I am sure Neville will agree with me on this - I will not let that man destroy my family a second time!"

Augusta did not know whether she was truly able to convince them that Dumbledore was not to be trusted, particularly when it came to Neville and his friends. But one had to start someplace.

The truth was that Alice, while not necessarily accepting what Augusta said as the truth, was not willing to trust the man with her son again. She would err on the side of caution. Frank was leaning that way as well. If what his mother said was true, the one person he had always thought was completely trustworthy (other than his wife) had let them suffer for some unfathomable reason. He might still be willing to give the man the benefit of the doubt on some things, but not when it came to his family.



It was Hermione's birthday. She turned eleven today. Or, more accurately, today was the eleventh anniversary of the day she was born. In reality, she was eleven, twenty-three and ten. Still, her family and friends celebrated this day as if it was truly her birthday. She had spent the day at Camp W as it was the meeting day for the "Juniors" in the Club. There was a large cake at lunch as there were whenever someone's birthday fell on a Camp W day. (All others had a party on the last Sunday of the month.) She got a few presents, but only from close friends who would not be attending the family party later that evening.

The party would be largest Hermione had known. Everyone now living at Potter House, aside from Frank and Alice Longbottom, would be there. Augusta and Neville would be there, along with Lord Black, Sirius, Sophie and little Emily. (Hermione hoped she would choose today not to be fussy. On the rare occasions when she was awake and not eating, Elaine's favorite pastime was crying, it seemed. Rose told her that was hardly unusual for a baby barely a month old.) Remus would be there as well. Then there would be both the Greengrass family and Harry and Clarice's Aunt and Uncle and their kids. (Except Eddie, who was still stationed in Germany with the British Army.) Luna and her family were going to be there as well.

Hermione arrived home from her day at Camp W before and of the others had arrived. This was partly because Harry and Clarice were involved with Quidditch which would run well into the afternoon. It was mainly because it was her birthday and she had taken a liking to birthdays since Harry and Clarice had come into her life. Before those two, it was just another day, although she never complained about cake and presents. With those two, however, it became almost like a holiday for her. She so looked forward to it now.

Neville followed sometime after Hermione. He wished her a happy birthday as he headed up the stairs to spend more time with his parents. Neville was eager, as always, to spend time with them. But he knew that today Augusta would be telling them as much as they could handle so he could too, he hoped. Oddly, he thought, it was all Hermione's idea. She had said that she wanted the Longbottoms to begin finding out what was going on and had suggested it would be a great idea for her birthday.



Neville smiled when he thought of that. It was so Hermione to be thinking of others rather than herself. This was only the second birthday of hers he attended and while she always got presents, she really did not expect any from invited guests. In this regard, her wishes were generally ignored, but it was not like she was showered with gifts either. Neville and his Gran had bought her a small collection of books that they knew she did not have. True, both the Potter and Black libraries had them. The Potter library had actual first editions which were probably worth a small fortune now, but it was not the same as having her own set of hard backed Jane Austin books. (Harry had suggested the gift.)

The “party” took place during and after dinner. Hermione was very pleased with the gifts she received, although she complained about how much Harry’s present may have cost. The truth was, Harry spent about as much on his sister as he did on Hermione, yet she always said it was too much. Not that her opinion on that subject would ever deter Harry. It was after dinner and presents, after most of the guests had left and just after Minerva arrived that something different happened.

“Take a look at this,” Sirius said carrying an old looking book from someplace in the house. With him were Lord Black, Robert Granger and Mike Evans. He laid the book down on the table opened to a particular page. It was clearly a photo album of some kind and there on one page was a picture of an old airplane. On the other were four relatively young men all in uniform.

“What’s this?” Hermione asked wondering why she should care about what were clearly old war photos.

“Best guess it’s Charlus Potter’s photo album from the War,” Lord Black said.

“World War II,” Mike Evans added.

“Harry and Clarice’s Great-grandfather flew fighters in the Muggle Air Force,” Lord Black continued. “Fought in – what was that?”



“Battle of Britain,” Mike Evans said. “Although this photo is from 1943 when he was a fighter group commander in Italy.”

“So?” Hermione asked.

“The man next to him is Squadron Leader Daniel Ryan according to this,” Lord Black continued.

“What?” Minerva asked looking at the photo. “Sweet Merlin! It is!”

“Who’s Daniel Ryan?” Hermione asked.

“He was a Muggle,” Minerva said. “His son was a wizard and he married your grandmother in 1961.”

“My great-grandfather?” Hermione asked.

Minerva nodded. “On your Muggle side.”

“There’s more,” Mike Evans said. “The two younger pilots. One is my dad - Harry and Clarice’s grandfather.”

“The other is my dad,” Robert Granger said. “Knew he flew fighters in the War, but this is a rather ironic photo when you think about it.”

“How so?” Hermione asked.

“Well, your great-grandfather and grandfather by adoption and Harry and Clarice’s non-magical grandfather and magical great-grandfather serving in the same war, practically in the same unit at the same time? Considering everything else, it seems...”

“Appropriate?” Minerva offered.

“Something like that,” Robert said. “And with that in mind, there’s something I want to show you.” Robert pulled out a large handgun, a revolver of sorts and placed it on the table.



“What’s this?” Hermione asked.

“A revolver,” Harry replied.

“I can see that! I mean what’s so special about an old handgun?”

“It’s a Webley-Fosbery,” Robert replied. “One of the only semi-automatic revolvers ever made. The company that made them provided the service revolvers to the British Army for decades, although the Army never fully adopted this one. My grandfather bought it in 1915 when he was an artillery officer during the First War. Took it with him to France. When Dad went off to war in ’40, he took it with him. Dad gave it to me when I became a Lieutenant in the Para’s. Still kept it as a back-up when I moved on to the S.A.S. After all, it seemed to keep two Grangers alive during two nasty wars, although I have no idea if it ever fired a shot in anger. I know I never had need for it.”

“Never?” Harry asked.

“Granddad was artillery,” Robert said. “Never went over the top or got closer than a mile or two from the Gerry’s, even when they had to retreat in the spring of ’18. Dad would only have needed it if he was shot down over enemy lines. He was shot down once. Battle of Britain. Bailed out over England and landed in a garden. Almost worse than landing among a bunch of Gerrys, he said as the woman of the house was less than pleased with the resulting condition of her cabbages. I never had need for it really, although the .455 caliber round would have been better at knocking down an enemy than our nine millimeter stuff. When I had some ops during the last magical war, I did carry. Had some specially loaded rounds from Office W just in case one of the bad guys turned out to be a Were.”

“Silver bullets?” Remus asked. “That would leave a mark.”

“Lead. The jacket was silver.”

“Still.”



“Why are you showing me this?” Hermione asked.

“Well, ‘cause it’s been in the family and at War,” Robert replied. “We all know another War is coming someday. I hope that someday is years from now, still... We Grangers have served Her Majesty’s government on and off most of this Century and in practically all its wars. I show you this piece of family history because I feel it will see War once again.”

“I hope not,” Rose said. “She’s just a girl.”

“Regrettably,” Minerva said, “our Wars are fought without regard to witch or wizard. The last one did not spare children either.”

“Still,” Rose said.

“Hermione is better prepared today than most of the ‘adults’ in our world, Rose,” Sirius said. “That Defense Mastery is beyond even our own Auror training in some things and as good as in others – save law enforcement stuff. Throw in her other Masteries and she would be quite capable. All of those ‘kids’ will be in time.”

“But children?”

“Mum, only my body is eleven as you well know,” Hermione said. “I’m really twenty-three. I’ll be twenty-eight this time next year.”

“Yet we still have a bedtime,” Harry quipped hoping for a change of topic.

“And, you still have this,” Minerva said handing Hermione an envelope.

“What’s this?” Hermione asked.

“Open it.”



Hermione did and pulled out a letter. She began to read it aloud:

“Ms. Hermione Granger: We are pleased to inform you that you have been accepted to Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry...

“I totally forgot we still would be...” Hermione began.

“Don’t I get one?” Harry asked.

“Letters go out once a month,” Minerva said. “This month it’s for potential students with September birthdays. July and August birthdays receive their letters in July.”

“Why the August ones?” Clarice asked.

“As the letter says, all students must reply by July 31st in order to attend.”

“So they don’t know about me yet?” Harry asked.

“Professor Dumbledore has never looked at the prospective class roster this early in the year,” Minerva replied. “By May, he’ll probably take a look; maybe as early as April. I doubt it’ll be sooner. Good thing, too.”

“Why?” several voices asked.

“Because I’ve added two names to the list. Those two students are technically too young to attend starting next fall, but I feel they should anyway.”

“Who?” Clarice asked.

“You and Ms. Luna Lovegood,” Minerva replied. “Can’t break up the set now, can we?”

“Is this a problem?” Rose asked.



“Ms. Lovegood might tip the Headmaster off,” Minerva replied. “He knows her family at least by reputation and might know that Luna is too young. I doubt it, but it’d be a moot point if she already had accepted. As for Clarice, I don’t think he’d make that connection. Assuming he remembers Harry and all, he will assume this is another Clarice, not Harry’s younger sister.”

“Wouldn’t the records show their birthdates?”

Minerva shook her head. “Actually, the official class lists do not. The list the Headmaster reviews is my copy of the official list. Only I have access to the original.”

“Why only you?” Rose asked. “I mean, he is your superior.”

“By law and magic, only one member of the staff may have access to the prospective class lists, arguably to prevent exactly what I am doing. Normally it would be the Headmaster. However, Dumbledore is also very busy with other things and delegated much of his usual responsibilities to me long ago, to include this as well as introducing each year’s Muggle Borns to our world.”

“What do you mean by prevent what you are doing?” Hermione asked.

“I’m adding two students to the official list. Neither one of them is due to receive an invite until next year, if at all. While Ms. Lovegood is most likely to be ‘invited’ next year, I cannot say the same is true about Clarice. Statistically speaking, it is more likely she would be invited to attend St. George’s as she is considered a Muggle Born living within St. George’s District. The Muggle Born’s who are sent to Hogwarts are selected from each of the other schools’ lists by a sort of magical lottery. This was done long ago because the other schools believed we were taking the best of the lot.”

“And me?” Hermione asked. “I’m a Muggle Born too, correct?”



“That’s what the Ministry considers you,” Minerva nodded. “Rubbish. But try as he might, Dumbledore is beating his head against an immovable object. Seems that the powers that be do not want to change that. Anyway, you are on the official Hogwarts list, Hermione. I had nothing to do with that.”

“I still don’t understand why they have to attend at all,” Rose said. “After all, it’s not like they need that education.”

“Sensei has said my attendance is important even under such circumstances,” Hermione said. “Harry and Luna’s as well. We are the magical heirs of the Founders and somehow that’s important.”

“And if you think they’re heading off without me,” Clarice began.

“But we don’t really know why it is important, do we?”

“Two of the horcruxes are still there,” Harry said.

“But you don’t need to be students to get those, do you?”

Harry shrugged. “Actually, I don’t think we really be students in any event. Not for long.”

“Why not?”

“Just a gut feeling,” Harry said. “That and as a student Dumbledore might feel free to try and point me in some direction. However, as a legal adult – and I will be by then – and possibly as an owner, it would be another matter. Still, won’t that list tip him off?”

“I can’t say for sure,” Minerva said. “For safety reasons, I think we should assume that it will.”

“And what would that mean?” Rose asked.

“Worst case scenario is that Dumbledore would remember everything about Harry Potter he has forgotten,” Minerva said. “The



good news, however, is that knowledge would not include how to get to him or bypass the Wards on this house. He would be unable to 'tamper' with Harry prior to Harry's arrival at Hogwarts."

"And will be in for a rude shock should he try to do so then," Hermione growled. "He already tried to ruin Harry's life once, and Clarice for that matter..."

"And Luna, and Neville," Harry added.

"We're not going to give him a second chance. We go to that place on our terms, not his."

"There still time to place a wager in the Weasley boys pool?" Sirius asked.

"What pool is that?" a few voices asked.

"The month and year the Club is no longer secret," Sirius replied. "I'm down for October 1993. Might want to change to September 1991."

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 12th, 1990, HOGWARTS SCHOOL OF WITCHCRAFT AND WIZARDRY, SCOTLAND, U.K.

Albus Dumbledore stood at the door of a small hut located at the edge of a forest. It was the home of Rubeus Hagrid and had been since Hagrid was about fourteen. Hagrid had been a student at Hogwarts but had been expelled by the then Headmaster for something Dumbledore knew he had not done. The problem was, while he had argued on Hagrid's behalf, he would not say how he knew Hagrid was innocent. For him to reveal that he suspected that the brightest and most popular student at the school was dabbling deeply into the Dark Arts, especially considering he had no real proof at the time, would not have gone well for anyone. But he was at least able to keep Hagrid on as gameskeeper and when he became Headmaster he used Hagrid for certain errands he would not trust to anyone else, such as the one that landed him upon the "threshold" of Hagrid's home.



The door opened and a giant of a man with long, wild hair and a matching beard stood before him. If one did not know Hagrid, one might assume he was both vicious and dimwitted. Both were patently false assumptions. Hagrid was a half-giant, something Dumbledore had always known. Unfortunately, so had Headmaster Dippet which was probably why the man was more than willing to believe his Head Boy and not the combined counsel of his staff as to Hagrid's "guilt." Dippet claimed until his retirement that Dumbledore had tricked him into admitting a half-giant and was probably looking for an excuse to expel the lad from the moment he first showed up.

"Evenin' Professor Dumbledore, Sir," Hagrid said.

"You asked to see me Hagrid?"

"Aye Sir! Got somethin' ya should be seein'. Come in."

"Thank you."

"Cuppa?"

"No thank you. Now what do you have?"

"Yes sir! Ya asked me t' fin' an animal ter guard somethin' valuable an' dangerous. A creature that mos' wizards wouldn't get past?"

"Indeed."

"Got one. Come 'ere Fluffy!"

A large creature came from the back of the Hut. It was actually a little larger than Hagrid's pet Boarhound. One might think it was a dog, at least until one realized it had three heads. The creature growled at the intruder.

"Nuff 'o tha' Fluffy!" Hagrid said firmly. "He's me guest."



The dog like thing stopped and lay down on the floor.

“Tha’s a good boy,” Hagird said.

“A Cerberus?”

“Aye,” Hagrid replied. “Jus’ a pup, though. Got ‘im of an’ Irish feller down at the pub few months back. E’s trainin’ up nicely, tha’s fer sure. Be full growed come next fall.”

“Excellent, my friend.”

Dumbledore was still planning his trap for Quirrell/Voldemort. He had decided that it should appear to be a well defended place to keep the fake stone. No defenses and his quarry might become suspicious. A Cerberus, fabled guardian of the gates of Hades, (the Greek version of the afterlife) would be a convincing defense. Of course, it would not be the only one. No point in making it too easy to get to where the stone would be hidden. But it should not be impossible either.

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 27th, 1990 – POTTER HOUSE, LONDON, U.K.

Harry and Hermione were sitting in the Parlor on the Ground Floor reading shortly after breakfast. Christmas had been wonderful and they had enjoyed their presents immensely. But it was over and Clarice had just left for the clinic. Neville had a cold and had returned to his room as soon as he finished hoping to get over it without nasty potions in time for the next Club meeting the weekend after next. Neither of the children initially noticed Alice Longbottom entering the room. It had only been about a month since Neville’s parents had been strong enough to climb the stairs in the house.

“Harry?” she asked.

Harry looked up from his reading. “Morning Lady Alice,” he said. He was never asked or told to call her this. She was his Godmother and had merely asked him to call her “Alice,” but he called her “Lady” in



no small part because he could get the older woman to blush almost without fail.

“I’ve been meaning to ask this for some time,” Alice said. “Harry, do you know anything about your parents?”

“Fair bit,” Harry said. “Sirius and Remus made sure Clarice and I knew as much as we could about them.”

“Do you miss them?”

Harry did not respond directly. “Why do you ask?”

“I was wondering. This must be difficult for you, you know.”

“What?”

“That’s our Neville was able to get us back and you and your sister...” her voice faded. “Do you ever think about them?”

“Of course,” Harry said. “Clarice and I visit them once a year now. Tell them what’s happening and stuff.”

“I mean do you wonder?”

“What it might have been like had none of this happened?”

Alice nodded.

“Used to all the time,” Harry said. “Back when I lived with the Dursleys. I tried not to believe what they said about them.”

“And what did they say?” Alice asked. She already knew that Harry knew he was never supposed to be sent there and had some idea about how bad it was for the boy.

“They were lazy, penniless, on the dole. Bunch of other mean things as well,” Harry replied. “Back then, I wanted it to be a lie. Turns out it



was. I also hoped all the time that someone from that life would come fetch me away from the Dursleys. Never thought it would happen, but I hoped. But now? No, I no longer really dwell on that.”

“Why not?”

“What would my life have been like had they lived? Would it have been better? Certainly ‘til I was almost eight it would have been. But since I came to the Grangers? I don’t know. I like to think it would have been a nice life. But better?”

“Clarice and I grew up very much alone. True, not in the same way, but alone none the less. Same’s true with Hermione. Until we met each other when I was in hospital, none of us had any friends. I’d like to think maybe that would have been different...”

“You would have known Neville,” Alice said.

Harry nodded. “Still, things could well be different. I would have grown up with an annoying little sister and she would probably have thought something similar about me. I have seen that, you know. Instead, we met when we were desperate for friends and both very scared. I was scared because of the Dursleys and I never wanted to go back. She was scared because she had just lost her family. I think we are much closer than we could have been had our lives not been as messed up as they were.

“Add to it that we would not have met Hermione. Not yet at any rate. Would she and I be friends had we met at Hogwarts? Would Clarice and she be friends? I can’t say. I can say I’m glad that we are and every day since we all met and became a family has been a blessing. We probably would not have met Luna either. All in all, I like to think I am better off now than I might have been.”

“I’m glad we met too,” Hermione said with a hint of tears in her voice.

“And don’t forget it was your parents who decided to send us to the Watanabe School,” Harry added. “Something tells me mine would never have thought of that.”



Hermione nodded.

Harry looked at Alice. "I have no memory of my parents. Neither does Clarice, nor Hermione as to her birthparents. I really cannot beat myself up about what might have been. This is the life I have. I happen to like it a lot, thank you.

"And as for Neville? We are all very happy with how things are turning out. We can't get our parents back, but he was determined to get you and Frank back and he succeeded. Even a small victory for our friend is a victory for all of us."

"Still," Alice began, "I mean it's just that I was supposed to... I would have never let what happened occur if I could."

"I know," Harry replied honestly. "I know. Sirius would never either. But it did happen. That can't be changed. I don't blame either of you and I never have."

"And this doesn't bother you?"

"It did," Harry admitted. "A long time ago, it did. You must remember, however, that for me the Dursley's were like fifteen years ago, not two. I have spent more than twice as much of my life here with Hermione, Clarice and my friends..."

"Or in Japan," Hermione said.

"Or in Japan, than with the Dursleys. That was a long time ago for me. Would I have wished they never happened? Of course. No one should ever have to go through that, certainly no kid. But when I think of all I have gained since then, I think I prefer this life to what might have been. Then again, this is the only life I know," Harry added with a bit of a smirk. As far as he knew, the Longbottoms did not know about Sensei. Neville did. Neville and Luna were among the handful of people who had seen and heard the "other Harry." Whether Neville told his parents, Harry could only guess.



“You don’t blame me?”

“You didn’t do anything wrong,” Harry said.

“We got ...” Alice began.

“The spell that was used on you and Frank would be an Unforgivable if it were known outside of the Black family. It was a part of their closely guarded magic. You could not have defended against it, short of killing all four of them...”

“Which would probably have gotten one or both of you killed,” Hermione added. “You’re back now. In the end that’s all that matters.”

“The only person I blame for any of that mess is Dumbledore,” Harry said. “Everything that happened he allowed because he believed he was right. He was not and is not. Far from it.”

“And You-Know-Who?” Alice asked.

“Voldemort?” Harry replied earning a gasp from Alice. “I really do wish people wouldn’t do that. Give’s the git more credit than he is due. Dumbledore probably could have nipped that little problem in the bud had he bothered. He didn’t.”

“How could he have?”

“Riddle was a student of Dumbledore’s. From what we’ve read, it was not as if the guy didn’t leave any clues about what he was becoming. Should have been tucked away in Azkaban forty years ago at least. Yet no one did anything and we know the results. The whole policy of the government – and by that I mean Dumbledore – when that cockroach finally crawled out of the woodwork is laughable. They should have been hunting down and killing Death Eaters from day one. The notion of social disruption, the official reason for treating a bunch of psychotic murderers with kid gloves, is so much rubbish. If that’s the society we should protect, than perhaps it should be done away with altogether.”



“You’re suggesting we should have stooped to his level?”

“His people killed innocent men women and children. They raped and murdered Muggles for fun! I hardly think killing animals is stooping to their level. That’s what they were and are, the ones who are still out there. No one has ever accused a rat catcher of murder. Dumbledore is only marginally better.”

“How can you say that?”

“He allowed it to happen,” Harry replied. “Thousands died in that last war both needlessly and in vain.”

“In vain?”

“The conditions and prejudices that gave rise to Voldemort and his Death Squads still exist. Those same conditions prevented any form of decisive action. The next Dark Lord will find this Country just as fertile ground as the last one. Or at least he would have.”

“I don’t understand.”

“The next time, he won’t face a population of easily mollified sheep incapable of defending themselves,” Hermione said. “The next time, he will have to deal with our generation. In a few years, there will be two thousand or more of us quite capable of destroying a Dark Lord and his minions. Not without losses on our part, but it will not go well for them at all.”

“And my Neville?”

“Bellatrix LeStrange had better pray she never meets Neville on opposite sides of a conflict,” Hermione said. “She won’t last five seconds!”

“You lot don’t think much of our society,” Alice observed.



The two children shook their heads. "It can be changed," Harry said. "It must be changed. For our future generations, it must change."

"When?"

Harry shrugged. "Sooner rather than later, but it needs to want change for change to really work. At least, that's what history shows us."

Alice had heard something similar from Neville and to her surprise Augusta. She did not know what to make of it. Still, everything she had learned since she had been "awakened" made her question everything she had believed as truth before. Dumbledore was not the wise leader she had believed. Magical society was seriously flawed. Even her own education was seriously lacking as compared to her own ten year old son. How much of her life had been based upon lies?



## CHAPTER FIFTY-THREE: WHY HOGWARTS?

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 9th, 1991 – HOGWARTS SCHOOL OF WITCHCRAFT AND WIZARDRY, SCOTLAND, U.K.

Albus Dumbledore sat down in his chair in the Staff Room for the weekly meeting. This was the first such meeting since the school came back into session following the Christmas holidays.

“Well,” he said, “I really do not have much. As you are all aware, I have been involved in various projects outside of school that have demanded a significant amount of my time. However, I am and always have been confident in Minerva’s abilities to keep this fine institution running smoothly without my personal, daily involvement. That being said, I am pleased to note that while my efforts on the matter within the halls of government continue to be an exercise in futility, we have managed to realize a sixty percent drop in the use of our Time Chamber as compared to this time last year. While this is not ideal and while it still means we will produce more of those unfortunate children than the other schools, it is a definite step in the right direction and I congratulate you on your efforts to achieve such results given the restriction under which we are forced to proceed.”

“At the cost of any hope of Slytherin being in the running for the House Cup,” Severus Snape grumbled.

“I appreciate the sacrifices you have had to endure, Severus.”

“You have not had to deal with the Howlers from irate parents regarding the apparent slights against their family,” Severus grumbled.

“Ah, and each has been brought to my attention. As you are well aware, I have written each and every of the complaining parents explaining in detail that given the current political climate and ongoing criticism from the press, we are merely endeavoring to enforce rules which have been on the books since well before even I was born. It is, most regrettably, something that my predecessors and I should not have ignored.



“Now, how were the first term results? Anything requiring my attention?”

“The last exams were most peculiar, Headmaster,” Severus said.

“Oh?”

“Well, I cannot speak for the others and as to my own exam, I saw no difference on the theoretical portion as many students still fail to grasp even the most basic concepts. However, there had been a marked improvement on the practical side, particularly in the Second through Fourth Years. Actually, almost exclusively in those years. I would say about a quarter of those years have improved far beyond what I have come to expect as a normal progression.”

“Any particular concerns Severus? Is it any one House?”

“No sir. Similar unusual improvements have been noted in all four houses, although slightly less so in my own. Of particular concern for me was that the Muggle Borns improved markedly.”

“Why is that a concern?”

“As you are aware, it is not unusual for children with a magical parent to receive some form of tutoring over the summer, particularly in potions as it is a magic that will not invoke the ire of those employed to enforce the Statute for the Reasonable Restrictions on Underage Magic. However, I am not aware of similar resources being available to those students who live wholly within the Muggle world.”

“Perhaps some of their magically raised friends saw to that. You are aware that there is no rule or law preventing such. What we do lack is government funding for any such program.”

“That possibility has crossed my mind, Headmaster. However, in the nearly ten years I have taught here this would be the first time something such as that occurred, particularly given the numbers.”



“Interesting. Have any others noted something similar? Minerva?”

“Nothing worthy of note. I am aware of an increase in study groups last term. As you are also aware, about one third of the students in Severus’s suspect years are seeking extra study and tutorials off campus on weekends. We did discuss this before last term, Albus. In that regard, those students have improved somewhat.”

“Indeed. I recall thinking it was a capital idea with the stipulation that they not be running about the land or otherwise engage in activities that might be in contravention of the laws regarding underage magic. And as I recall, Severus, that particular program is open to and does have a notable number of students from your House.”

Severus nodded.

“Aside from that minor aberration,” Minerva continued, “one which might very well be entirely of the students’ own initiative and new or renewed dedication – I cannot say I’ve noticed anything out of the norm. After all, we cannot expect all the students to devote their time off to additional study. It would be nice, but it is also unrealistic.”

“Filius?”

“Minerva’s assessment is consistent with my observations, Headmaster.”

“Elmira?”

“As you are aware, Headmaster, I’ve only been on staff for a term. None of my predecessors were here for more than a full year and they all taught a different course in many ways such that it is impossible for me to comment on this issue. I have no basis for evaluation and, as I will not be returning next year, I cannot offer a suggestion as to how to evaluate the Defense students under new instruction.”

“Well I suppose it’s much ado about nothing,” Dumbledore concluded. “You should be flattered that your students are making an



effort to finally take your course seriously, Severus. You have been complaining about their general lack of drive in regards to potions for years.”

“Yes Headmaster.”

The conversation moved on to other topics. Minerva had time to reflect as Albus decided it was once again time to complain about his favorite Quidditch team, the Chuddeley Cannons.

The one problem she and her two colleagues had regarding running interference for those Hogwarts students who were in the Club was one their counterparts at the other schools did not have at all. Hogwarts was a boarding school. Somehow, the fact that about seventy-five students, almost a quarter of the student body, was leaving the school almost every weekend had to be explained. Last year it had been easier as there were fewer students to cover for and they were not all leaving at the same time as they alternated weekends. Now, however, some explanation needed to be given as the only weekends the students were not leaving were those that included either inter-house quidditch matches or a Hogsmeade weekend where the students were allowed to visit the nearby village.

Minerva had explained it away last year that the weekend departures were for additional tutoring in current course materials, largely limited to potions and magical theory. This was not entirely false of course. What she was withholding was the fact that the studies the children were receiving were far beyond what the Ministry would have approved. She passed it off as an idea some parents had proposed and were funding separately. As Albus was too busy to take an interest in what was little more than an intensive study group and one that Minerva was supposedly in charge of supervising – for that was what she told him – he had conveniently ignored the issue.

Snape’s revelations might well have piqued his curiosity had it not been adeptly deflected. While it might be anticipated that students receiving extra instruction would do better in their course work, Snape’s implication was that the improvement went beyond what reasonably could have been expected. Minerva noted with no small interest that Albus had directed his questions at the four staff



members who taught true applied magic at all levels. They were the ones most likely to recognize that their students might be learning forbidden skills. Fortunately, the Club students had been doing a fair job of keeping their displays of skills within their year's course material, instead of the higher standard O.W.L. and N.E.W.T.s that many of them had already passed. Still, it was a close call.

She was not worried about herself. One could hardly function as Deputy Headmistress under Albus Dumbledore without being skilled at occlumency, or at least skilled enough that Albus would refrain from attempting his legilimency skills.

Pamona was similarly skilled but at risk only because she was head of house. Like most courses at Hogwarts, the applied Herbology was not a display of magical ability, simply applying theory to a plant problem or identifying various plants and their uses. At least through O.W.L.s, there was generally no need to use magic in her greenhouses.

Filius was half-goblin on his mother's side. Minerva never asked about this odd mix. Goblins and humans rarely interacted on any level outside of banking. However, being half-goblin made him immune from offensive mind arts such as legilimency. The goblin side meant that any thoughts detected through that art would appear as deception. Goblins were not pathological liars, but it was impossible to tell when they were being truthful using mind arts. If you could not tell when they were truthful, there was no way to gauge when they were being deceptive.

The two potential sources of concern were Snape and Professor Chastain. But, Chastain correctly noted she had no prior benchmark in which to evaluate the students' current performance. As for Snape, he apparently did not have enough to really make this an issue. The more Minerva thought about this, the more she suspected he had raised the issue in hopes of receiving an excuse to begin docking points from the other houses in a desperate attempt to overcome the fact that he had himself placed Slytherin in negative numbers in terms of points. He had announced that he would dock 100 points each from any couple caught showing "an inappropriate degree of affection" and at least 300 points each from any couple whose



amorous activities went beyond kissing. Apparently, some members of his House were slow learners.

Minerva was pleased that she was still walking the tightrope and the true nature of the Club remained secure for now. So far the deception had an element of truth behind it. Minerva was certain that this might very well change before Harry and the rest left for Hogwarts.

MONDAY, MAY 20th, 1991 – HOGWARTS SCHOOL OF WITCHCRAFT AND WIZARDRY, SCOTLAND, U.K.

“You wished to see me Albus?” Minerva said as she entered the Headmaster’s Office.

“Indeed,” he replied. “Would it be inconvenient to go over the prospective list for next year’s entering class?”

“Not at all,” Minerva replied. Of course it was inconvenient, she thought. She also knew it was rapidly becoming unavoidable. She withdrew a folded piece of parchment from her robes and handed it to the Headmaster. He opened it up and began to read the names.

“Abbott, hmm? That the old line family?” he asked.

“Her older brother Justin is a Third Year Hufflepuff,” Minerva answered with a nod.

“Indeed. Bones? Any relation to Madam Amelia Bones at Law Enforcement?”

“Her niece,” Minerva replied. “The girl’s parents were killed in the War. Amelia has raised her.”

Albus read a little further. “Crabbe and Goyle,” he noted. “Death Eater’s sons?”

Minerva nodded.



“Guess it can’t be helped. No reason to believe the boys will turn out like their fathers...”

No reason not to either, Minerva thought. Those attitudes tended to run in families, especially pureblood social climbing ones not known for their intellectual prowess or business acumen.

“Longbottom? This Frank and Alice’s boy?”

“I believe so.”

“Any idea where he’s at? I’ve been told their Manor has not been occupied in months. Not since those two vanished from St. Mungo’s.”

“I’ve heard from Augusta. She and her grandson are touring overseas. Wanted the boy to see a bit of the world before life hits him in the face.” It was a lie and Minerva hoped Albus’s preoccupation with the parents would help mask it. She knew exactly where he and his family were.

“It’s been eight months,” Dumbledore moaned, “and they still can’t get a lead on two invalids!”

“Who?”

“Frank and Alice disappeared from St. Mungo’s in September. MLE has been looking everywhere for any sign of them. I made this a top priority case and nothing!”

“Really?” Minerva asked in mock surprise. “Disappeared?”

“Into thin air so it would seem. No bodies. No clues. It’s been a top priority case for months and nothing.”

“Why a top priority? They were little better than corpses last I heard. Surely...”



“It is possible they were – er – killed. But it is also possible that they are alive and might be used...”

“How?”

“They have information that could cause major difficulties should it ever come to light.”

“Albus, they were insane, incurably so. Whatever information they have is surely lost.”

“I cannot risk that! The Greater Good would be in jeopardy should someone – anyone find some way to access their former memories.”

“What kind of information could they have, Albus? It’s been well over nine years since they had a coherent thought! Surely whatever they might have known is yesterday’s news by now. After all, the War is over!”

“I ... honestly I cannot remember.”

“Well it must be real important,” Minerva said sarcastically. “You made this a top priority case because they might have critical information that would ruin your Greater Good. So critical that the very fact that nine years of the best treatment we can offer could not cure them yet so long as there is the remotest possibility by some miracle of magic someone might be able to access those thoughts, it’s a top priority case and yet it is so critical you cannot remember it at all?”

“You cannot very well expect me to remember everything about what happened nine years ago!” Albus protested.

“No,” Minerva agreed, “but I should be able to expect you not to through your weight around without knowing why! If you cannot remember why the Longbottoms’ fate is of any importance to anyone other than Augusta, Neville, their family and friends, why is it such a high priority for the government?”



“The family deserves to know...”

“That’s not what you said, Albus! You said the reason their fate was important had something – you cannot remember what – but something to do with your Greater Good! Which is it?”

“Perhaps I overreacted...”

“An understatement.”

Hoping to avoid further argument, Dumbledore returned to the list. After commenting upon some other children connected with the Death Eaters, he stopped and paled noticeably. Minerva knew what name he had reached, but was not completely sure what the man’s reaction would be.

“Merlin’s Beard!” he said. “Harry Potter?”

“I believe it is the same lad that landed you in hot water a few years ago,” Minerva said. “The abuse scandal?”

“That’s not it, Minerva! He’s The-Boy-Who-Lived!”

“What rubbish! Don’t tell be you believe those children’s books!”

“Minerva, he destroyed Voldemort! He survived the Killing Curse!”

“And what proof do you have? Anyone see it happen? Or was it just the fact the poor lad wasn’t dead? Do you have any idea how crazy that sounds? A fifteen month old baby surviving an un-survivable curse and destroying the most powerful Dark Wizard of the last three hundred years? As I recall, aside from a boy too young to have any memory, there were no other live witnesses, were there? What is more plausible: a super power baby who defeats Dark Wizards between nappie changes; or a very powerful witch who managed a final surprise just before she died? I’d put my money on Lily Potter!”



“I will concede Lily would make a more believable explanation but for some additional facts not generally known.”

“Such as?”

“It would be best for all concerned that such information not be disseminated.”

“I see,” Minerva replied indignantly. “It is too sensitive for us lowly peasants to understand or use responsibly, is that it?”

“You don’t understand! That boy’s future is vital to the Greater Good!”

“Vital? He hasn’t been vital in three years! You haven’t mentioned him since the Investigation and then it was only because of the damage his case did to your precious reputation! I have news for you, Albus, the world has not come to an end! The boy is just that – a boy!”

“He should never have been allowed to leave his relatives...”

“Oh! The same relatives that nearly killed him? The same ones who told the Muggle Authorities they thought he drowned or something? Those relatives? What, did your Greater Good require him to bleed to death alone in a Muggle House at age eight or so?”

“No! There were important reasons for him to be there! It was paramount to his safety and development!”

“Almost a direct quote from your testimony, Albus! No one believed you then! That boy suffered worse than any prisoner in Azkaban and you would have the world believe it was for his own safety? Well, that doesn’t work! His safety was not so important for you to take an interest in him until now!”

“Don’t you see? He was with his Aunt because that allowed a Blood Ward to be used for his safety!”



“A Ward classified by the Ministry as Dark Magic? You trying to breed little Dark Wizards?”

“No!”

“Sounds like it from where I sit. And don’t think I’m alone in this. Do you have any idea how close you came to seeing this school closed?”

“What do you mean?”

“Aside from Severus, Sybil, Flitch, Madam Pince, Hagrid and maybe Binns – who hardly counts, most of the staff considered resigning when they learned both about the abuse that poor boy suffered and how you knew about it ....”

“I did not!”

“YOU SHOULD HAVE! You should have and you did NOTHING! Throw in the revelations that you sealed the Potter Will, which specifically forbade his going to that pathetic excuse for a family and you allowed his Godfather to rot in prison without so much as a trial...”

“That was the information the Longbottoms had,” Albus said.

“What?”

“That either they or Black should have been his caretakers.”

“So? What does that have to do with anything. Unless ... Albus you didn’t!”

“I didn’t what?”

“Set the Longbottoms up for attack!”



Albus paled briefly. "Don't be silly. Three years lost! I need to see that boy..."

"Absolutely NOT!"

"Excuse me?"

"Don't you think you cause him enough pain?"

"The Greater Good..."

"Oh sod your Greater Good! You will not have anything more to do with that boy."

"And if I disagree with your assessment?"

"Than either you will leave this school forever, or your staff will. Either way, your tenure as Headmaster will end! This is not an idle threat, Albus. One word from me and the staff is out the door in the morning! Sack me and you will have the same result. You've been Headmaster in name only for far too long to have any real say at this point!"

"Minerva..."

"No Albus! You want your precious position? You will treat that boy no better and no worse than any other student who enters this castle! You will take no more interest in his personal life than any other student – which from what I've observed means no interest whatsoever! Anything more, any attempt to play with him like some kind of toy, and Hogwarts will no longer continue with you as its Head!"

Albus knew Minerva all too well. The witch was quite formidable in her own right. She also did not make idle threats. She never bluffed. He also knew how the cards were playing. For all practical purposes, as Headmaster he had been and absentee landlord for the better part of the last two decades. Minerva was the de facto head of Hogwarts, Albus was merely the face. The staff members she mentioned as not



inclined to leave would stay not because of Albus Dumbledore, rather because this was their only home, their only job, or in the case of Severus, because leaving was a death sentence. Albus had exposed Severus as a spy against the Death Eaters to keep him out of prison after the War. People tend to have violent dislikes for those who spy on them. Minerva had never before challenged Albus like this. But she sure knew the game and the ground. This was a challenge he could not win and he knew it.

Albus knew that this battle was lost. But wars consisted of many battles. Somehow, the plan would be set to rights. Still, best not to cross Minerva for now.

What Albus did not know was this was not some fortuitous encounter. Thanks to a magical projection of a man who might no longer exist, Minerva knew far more about what Dumbledore was up to than he would ever know. She knew that he was a threat to Harry and that threat had to be dealt with sooner rather than later. Minerva had been planning it for years, building her position and getting her pieces into their positions. She had known this day was coming since the day she first met Harry in the hospital and knew what she would have to do for him, for her great-granddaughter and for what remained of her family. The Chess Master had walked into her carefully laid out checkmate – for now.

WENESDAY, MAY 22nd, 1991 – POTTER HOUSE, LONDON, U.K.

“So he knows then?” Hermione asked.

Minerva nodded.

“But I thought the wards...”

“The memory component is similar in many ways to the Fidelius Charm,” Harry said. “If the knowledge of my existence is disseminated in the right way, people will remember. Remember, everyone associated with the Club knows who I am.”

“How?” Hermione began.



“Go a book on it when I was in Japan last summer,” Harry replied. “We all knew this would happen. Wanted to know how and have a good idea when. I wanted to avoid that hero nonsense as long as possible and keep low when I could not any longer.”

“The Club doesn’t treat you like some hero,” Luna said.

“They know me better I’d like to think,” Harry said.

“I know you’re a hero,” Luna said batting her eyes playfully. Harry knew she was joking.

“Yeah, well I did help you and some others once.”

“Much better than that Boy-Who-Lived nonsense,” Luna said. “Saving lives is better than surviving.”

“So,” Hermione said, “how long until everyone knows?”

“Depends upon whether Dumbledore keeps his trap shut,” Harry said.

“He will,” Minerva offered.

“How do you know?” Neville asked.

“Let’s just say I made him an offer he couldn’t refuse and leave it at that for now.”

“Still,” Harry added, “even if he act like a good little Headmaster, that secret won’t last much longer, will it?”

“All bets are off come mid August,” Minerva said. “That’s usually when the list of students for Hogwarts is published in the Daily Prophet.”

“Longer than I had hoped,” Harry said.



“I still don’t see why any of them have to go there,” Remus added with Sirius nodding in agreement. “It’s not like they need an education.”

“I would agree as to the reason why they do not have to go,” a voice said. An old man had appeared out of thin air. For Harry, Hermione and Clarice, his appearance was somewhat commonplace. He appeared about once a week, although it had been a long time since he had said anything they considered important or useful. He was “biding his time” “until the moment was right” or some such. The last time he said anything “useful” was when he warned them about the possible death of Luna’s mother, which was over a year and a half earlier by the calendar and closer to six years for them in their time experience.

Luna and Neville saw Sensei less often. They had been able to on those occasions when they were with the others since a few months after they had become friends. To date, if one were to ask them, Sensei told amazing stories, but little else.

Remus, Sirius, Minerva and the Grangers were the only adults who could see and hear Sensei. Long ago, after Luna and Neville had become aware of him, he had said that this small group would probably constitute the only ones who could see him. His ability to appear and interact with the world in anyway was based upon trust mostly. He could appear to Harry because in many ways he was Harry or a Harry. He could appear to the magical adults, Luna, Neville and Hermione because he had trusted those people implicitly in his time and never had true cause to doubt that trust and the same was true of this young Harry. He could appear to the Grangers because they had become Harry’s surrogate parents and the lad trusted them. And he could appear to Clarice for a similar reason: she was an integral part of this Harry’s family. Sensei surmised it was conceivable that he might be able to appear to Sophie and Lord Black on similar grounds, but chose not to.

“However,” Sensei continued, “there are ample reasons to go. Do you remember any?”



“Horcruxes,” Harry said.

Sensei nodded. “There are two within the walls of Hogwarts this very minute. They are well hidden and in one case well guarded. There is no way to get to them without attracting undue attention aside from entering Hogwarts as a supposed student.”

“Where are they?” Sirius asked.

“A very good question,” Sensei said. “It is a fair bet that both are in locations the Marauders never discovered.”

“I find that hard to believe.”

“I don’t,” Sensei said. “The reason I don’t is I know for a fact that neither location ever appears on the Marauder’s Map.”

“You know about the Map?” Remus asked. “But we lost it ages ago.”

“Filtch got it off the Rat,” Sirius growled. “Wanted to throttle the little coward but Prongs would not let me!”

“What’s this map thing?” Clarice asked.

“As you know, when we were at Hogwarts we called ourselves the Marauders,” Remus began.

“With such lovely nicknames,” Hermione huffed. She didn’t like the one she had received for her common Animagus. Miss Kitty was so unimaginative.

“Well, James, Sirius and I made an enchanted map of the castle and grounds,” Remus said. “It showed everything we knew: all the rooms, secret passages, trick doors, everything. But, it also shows the location of every person, ghost or potential ‘threat’ to a late night



stroll in the castle. No one's location went unknown to us or remained a secret with that map. Nothing could defeat it."

"We know," Sirius said. "We tried. James's invisibility cloak couldn't hide him from the map. Our animagus forms couldn't fool the map. In sixth year James nicked some Polyjuice potion from the Potions Lab. It too showed the real person, not the fake."

"So that's how you boys got away with it?" Minerva asked.

Sirius and Remus nodded.

"Had I found that Map, I don't know," Minerva said. "I'd have probably given you a month's detention for using it and a hundred points each for making it."

"That map sounds brilliant!" Harry said.

"We are already having a proper influence on the lad, eh Mooney?" Sirius said.

"More like corrupting," Minerva answered in Remus's place. "Any idea where that map is today?"

"Your best bet is to ask the Weasley boys," Sensei said. "Fred and George stole it from Flitch's office their First Year in my time and from what I've heard of their antics, I would be surprised if they were not using the map now."

"A map like that would explain quite a deal," Minerva said. "However, my bet is their brother Percy was the one to get it this time. There's no way he could have pulled the stunts he did his Second Year without getting caught unless he could somehow sense us from a distance."

"You're not thinking of confiscating it?" Sirius asked.

"That depends."



“On what?”

“On whether I catch them using it,” Minerva replied. “If you must know, I knew about that invisibility cloak of James Potter’s within days of its arrival. His dad sent me an owl on it. Had I caught James using it, you can bet I would have confiscated it. But where’s the fun in being all knowing? Even knowing how he got around unseen did not make catching him easy. Almost caught him once or twice, but...” she chuckled.

“You knew?” Remus and Sirius asked in shock.

Minerva nodded. “I was quite the prankster in my day, I’ll have you know. I respect a creative one well executed. It’s a game. You try to create mischief, I try to catch you at it. Even with such tools, I can honestly say you lot (and the Weasley boys) saw more of me in detention than anyone.”

“I would suggest,” Sensei said, “that it might be a good idea for the remaining Marauders to borrow the map from the Weasley boys. First off, it’s not as if they’ll need it...”

“And we would?” Remus asked.

“Not personally, but the two of you could probably make a copy...”

“Brilliant!” Harry said.

“Why brilliant?” Hermione asked him.

“’ Cause if we have a copy and they have a copy, we could use their humor based activities as a diversion for whatever it is we need to do.”

Hermione nodded. “Pity we don’t have that cloak as well.”

“Dumbledore does,” Sensei said.



“He does? How?” several voices asked.

“When James Potter was in hiding, he borrowed it for some reason. Never gave it back.”

“How do you know?” Minerva asked.

“He gave it to me as a Christmas present First Year,” Sensei said. “I didn’t know it was from him at the time. And no, aside from it was an heirloom of sorts, he never told me why he gave me such a key to mischief and misadventure.”

“Okay,” Hermione said, “now about these horcruxes?”

“One is located in the Room of Requirement which I know the Marauders never found ‘cause it’s not on that map at all. It is a magical room that appears in whatever form a person wants or needs at the time. In one version, students and faculty have been hiding stuff for centuries. That version is larger than the Great Hall and stuffed to the rafters with enough junk to stock four or five stores. In that mess is the Diadem of Ravenclaw.”

“But that’s been lost since the days of the Founders,” Minerva said.

“And guess who found it,” Sensei replied. “He had a gift for that sort of treasure hunt. I’ll provide you with more details as to how to find it when you lot get back from Japan.

“As for the second Horcrux, it’s located in the Chamber of Secrets...”

“That’s real?” Minerva asked in shock.

“All too real, I am afraid.”

“What is this Chamber?” Rose asked.



“Thought to be a legend,” Minerva said. “One of the Founders – Salazar Slytherin – is said to have created it and made it into a lair for a monster who’s supposed to be released to purge the school of all those Slytherin felt unworthy.”

“It was opened in 1943 by Tom Riddle,” Sensei continued. “Said monster did manage to kill one student before Tom caged it up again and framed another for the murder. Only someone with a Slytherin gift can open the Chamber and deal with the Monster.”

“What kind of monster?”

“Great ruddy basilisk, ‘bout sixty feet long,” Sensei replied.

“That means Clarice and me,” Harry said.

“Why?” Robert asked.

“A basilisk is a giant, magical snake,” Hermione replied. “Deadly too. Since you need a Slytherin gift to get in and to control it, that means Parsletongues...”

“Which means us,” Clarice said. “Still, how do you control a beast that’s gaze kills you dead? How do you kill it?”

“When I did it,” Sensei said, “a phoenix gouged out its eyes for me and I killed it with a sword, although I don’t recommend that method. I was twelve at the time and it damn near killed me. A crowing rooster kills it dead and is a lot safer.”

“Why didn’t you do that?” Luna asked.

“’ Cause someone killed all the roosters for miles around,” Sensei replied. “Anyway, in the space where the monster slept is a shield that belonged to Godric Gryffindor. It’s the other horcrux.”

“And where is the entrance to this Chamber?” Minerva asked.



“Second Floor girl’s bathroom. The one no one uses,” Sensei replied.

“Moaning Myrtle!”

“Being the rather depressing ghost of the student Riddle killed in ’43,” Sensei finished.

After a pause, Harry said: “So that’s it? Two horcruxes and we’re done? That basilisk is a poser, but I think we can manage...”

“There will be a third, but it won’t arrive until the following fall,” Sensei said.

“How?”

“When’s Lucius Malfoy due to be released from prison?”

“Later this month,” Minerva said.

“Then he’s still likely to introduce the think in the fall of ’92.”

“Why?” Several voices asked.

“He’s got a thing against the Weasley’s,” Sensei said. “He’ll use that horcrux to try and get one of the younger ones possessed and get her to release the basilisk.”

“Ginny?” Luna asked.

Sensei nodded.

“Not this time around,” Harry said. “Forewarned is forearmed. This time, he will be delivering it to its destruction. Easy enough. Three horcruxes and that’s it then?”

“Actually,” Sensei said, “those are your secondary targets.”



“Excuse me?” Rose said. “Secondary? A killer snake is secondary?”

“Voldemort is your primary,” Sensei said.

“What?” Minerva and others asked.

“Professor Quirinus Quirrell...”

“What’s that man got to do with Voldemort?” Minerva asked. “He’s not even at Hogwarts!”

“For now,” Sensei said. “He will return next fall and teach Defense Against the Dark Arts. Not very well, I might add.”

“So?”

“He will be under active possession by the primary soul of Voldemort when he returns.”

“Oh bugger!” Harry moaned.

“What?” Neville asked.

“Means we have to kill him – Quirrell that is.”

“Why?” Clarice asked. “I mean they did that ritual on you our first summer and you didn’t have to die.”

“The fragment was not actively in control of me,” Harry said. “In Curse Breaking we were learning about that. If the possession is in active control of the possessed, the possessing spirit cannot be removed without killing its host. The easiest and safest way to get rid of the evil spirit is to kill the host. If you merely try and exorcise the spirit, the host will die anyway and the spirit will be able to possess another. Kill the host and the spirit is weakened such that it cannot successfully take possession of another for some time. There are some exceptions, but this doesn’t sound like one. So we have to kill him.”



“That simple?” Hermione asked.

“We can’t allow Voldemort to come back yet,” Harry said. “Long ago Sensei said it cannot happen before the spring of 1995. So he must be stopped. If he takes full possession of this Quirrell guy, he can come back somehow. So we have to get him out of Quirrell which will be fatal to the man. Hence, Quirrell must die. If you can figure out an effective way of sending Voldemort back into Limbo or wherever it’s been he’s been hanging out, by all means I am open for suggestions. But unless you come up with one before the end of next spring, he has to die. Personally, if I have to kill him I’d prefer just to get it over with rather than have loads of time to think about it.”

“And I would recommend Muggle means,” Sensei said. “And you can’t touch him.”

“Why and why not?”

“Your touch, just as mine, is fatal to Voldemort for some reason. Dumbledore thought it had something to do with how your mother died. I don’t know. I do know when I killed him that’s all I did – touched him. As for why no magic? Voldemort consistently underestimated me and will do the same for you. However, he never makes the same mistake twice. The less he knows about what you really can do to him or his followers the better.”

“Nine millimeter brain hemorrhage,” Neville suggested. “Won’t even have to get too close to the plonker.”

“A gun?” Hermione asked.

“A magical raised in the magical world will have little or no idea what it is or what it can do,” Luna noted. “I would keep it unloaded though.”

“Quirrell was teaching Muggle Studies,” Minerva noted.



“Which means he probably thinks we still use flintlocks,” Harry observed. “It will be an option but not the only one. Given the fun we’ll be having, I am most definitely not leaving my sword behind.”

“I just wish there was another way,” Hermione sighed.

“So do I,” Harry admitted. “But if there is no other way.”

Hermione nodded. “Only if there is no other reasonable way.”

Harry nodded in agreement. “So that’s it then? Destroy three horcruxes, snuff one Dark Lord infested professor and we’re shot of the place?”

“Well, that’s up to you, but you, Hermione and Luna are the magical heirs of the four founders. That might have advantages,” Sensei replied.

“If you are all eleven and over seventeen,” Minerva began, “you can claim your birthrights. As the four founders heirs, if you vow to share, that includes Hogwarts and all lands granted to the Founders. That includes all of Hogsmeade Valley and another valley just over the north ridge.”

“And you can extend any wards that encompass the school to encompass the whole land grant,” Sensei added. “And then there’s the Founders’ Tower.”

“What’s that?” several voices asked.

“It’s a legend,” Minerva said. “But if the Chamber of Secrets is real, perhaps the tower is too. It was where the Founders lived. In legend, it has a library of unsurpassed size – the magical equivalent of the lost Library of Alexandria some say. That might be a bit much, but it would surely have the collected and forgotten works of the Founders.”

“And where is the tower?” Harry asked.



“No one knows for sure. It disappeared when the last of them passed away. It’s said to be somewhere on the lands, it might even be a part of Hogwarts itself, but it vanished and can only be found and restored to this world by the four heirs working together.”

“Just think of the knowledge that might be there,” Hermione sighed.

“And the dust,” Neville added.

“Okay,” Harry said. “Don’t know about the rest of you lot but that sounds to be like a more fun adventure and less dangerous than basilisks and snuffing professors.”

The others nodded in agreement.

“Okay, so that’s it then?” Harry asked. “Destroy three horcruxes, deal with one large, nasty basilisk, snuff one professor, claim our birth right and claim the Founders’ Tower?”

“And prepare for the war that will come,” Sensei said.

“Goes without saying,” Neville said. “Already doing that.”

“That’s it then.”

“Pretty full plate but doable,” Harry noted.

“Just one question,” Sirius asked, “and maybe I missed a meeting ...”

“Or you were not paying attention,” Remus quipped.

“...Anyway, why is Hermione and heir? I mean Minerva is still alive and kicking. Or did we miss that announcement as well?”

“Because it doesn’t work exactly like other inheritances,” Luna said. “Minerva became the Heir when her mother died. Her oldest daughter would then be the Heir Apparent. Once she had a daughter, she



becomes the Heir and the granddaughter the Heir Apparent. When Hermione was born, her Mum was the Heir and she became the Heir apparent. Once her Mum died, Hermione became the Heir. Now I am the Heir 'cause the Hufflepuff line came from my Dad's line, not my Mum's. As there were no older women alive in that line, I became the Heir the day I was born."

"I guess that makes sense," Remus said.

"Speak for yourself," Robert Granger retorted. "It's all nonsense to me."

"This all sounds so dangerous," Rose added.

"Remember, Mum, we are all fully trained witches and wizards by British standards even if they don't know it yet," Hermione said.

"In my timeline," Sensei added, "I faced all these challenges, save the Founders' Heirs stuff, at age eleven and twelve. I had no prior experience with magic and, I can assure you, I was not a brilliant student. They can do this."

Rose nodded. They had similar discussions in the past about war and other things she hoped her daughter and Harry and Clarice would never see. She still saw them as children, she still insisted they had a bed time. But she also knew they knew more magic than most adults witches and wizards in Britain and would know even more come August. Still, why was any of this necessary?

SUNDAY, JUNE 23rd, 1991 – CAMP W, U.K.

The end of the year had come for the Club. The new entering class for this summer in Japan added four hundred and seventy-two new children to the British Invasion bringing the total in the British school to nine hundred and twenty-nine. All were now seated in the large dining hall with their parents and families for the end of year diner. Including faculty reps, there were nearly two thousand in the room.



“So what’s the deal?” a girl named Agnes from St. Alban’s asked Ginny Weasley as they ate.

“With what?” Ginny replied.

“You know Harry Potter right?”

“I’d say we’re friends, although I’d say Clarice and I and Luna are closer friends. Yeah.”

“Don’t you think he’s cute?”

Ginny shrugged. “He’s okay. Me? I think his cousin Billy’s cuter. But that’s just me.”

“So you don’t think The-Boy-Who-Lived is prime future boyfriend material?”

“Er – well I suppose The-Boy-Who-Hates-That-Name could be but...”

“But?”

“Please! You HAVE seen him with Hermione!”

“But she’s like his sister, right?”

Ginny shook her head. “Clarice Jameson is like his sister and that’s a bit of a story. Hermione’s just the girl down the hall. Her room is just down the hall from his. And ... well, you know any brothers that hold their sister’s hand all – the – time?”

“Well...”

“Or kiss?”

“On the lips?”



“Not that I’ve seen, but they do kiss each other ... a lot. Pretty disgusting about it if you ask me.”

“So she’s like his girlfriend then?”

“They won’t say so, but yeah.”

“Darn.”

“You’re attention please?” a voice announced. Everyone looked up and saw Harry standing at a podium.

“Well,” he said, “welcome to our end of the year dinner. First off, I’d like to thank each of the faculty reps from our six schools and all who attended this year for somehow managing to keep this all secret. Unless I missed it, the Daily Prophet still has no idea we exist.

“Next, I want to congratulate St. Alban’s Seniors on a fine season and the unfortunate way they defeated Hogwarts to win the Senior W.I.S.E. League trophy.”

There was a large round of applause along with a few chuckles as everyone knew which school “The High Command” supported.

“ I would congratulate the Hogwarts Juniors on their stellar undefeated season and Junior League Championship, except as I was Seeker, I don’t think that would be appropriate. St. George’s did give us a good game in the finals, though.

“Now some announcements before the obligatory food fight begins,” Harry said earning more laughs as all the places had already been cleared.

“First off, those of you in Watanabe Years 88 through 90 who will be shifting to school, please note that you may do so either next Friday or Saturday. If you wait to Sunday, you’ll be too late.



“Our Minders and Year '91 will be departing in Charters from Heathrow on Friday, arriving Saturday morning Japan time. Please make sure you get there in plenty of time. We had no problems last year, and it would not do to have any this year.

“Finally, I'd like to thank all of those parents and friends who have agreed to come with us to Japan to act as Magical and Non-magical Minders. I would like you all to give a special round of applause to my Foster Mum Rose Granger and our good friend Minerva McGonagall who will be travelling with us for their fourth summer...” there was a loud round of applause ... “as well as all those first timers who have so graciously volunteered their time to try and keep the Weasleys from turning the school all pink and fuzzy again.” There was another round of laughter. It was especially loud and long from everyone who had been there for the Weasley Boys end of summer prank. “Thank you.”

Harry stepped down and walked to a table and sat down. “Mr. and Mrs. Longbottom?”

Frank and Alice looked at Harry.

“What do you think?”

“This is not what I expected,” Frank said.

“It's amazing!”

“Just wait 'til you get to Japan,” Neville said. “That's what's really amazing.”

“See you back at the house,” Harry said several minutes later. I got some mingling to do.

Harry walked over to another table. Seated there were Percy, Fred and George Weasley and Sirius and Remus. “Well?” Harry asked.

“While it pains us to do this,” Percy said, “we have turned over the Map to the Makers.”



“With the promise that they make two copies,” Fred added.

“Why two?” Harry asked.

“We cover more ground with two maps,” George replied.

“Just make sure McGonagall does not find out that little tidbit,” Sirius said. “Although I’m not sure if she can, I wouldn’t put it past her to try and give ‘ol Mooney and me detention for the increased mayhem.”

“She won’t hear it from us,” Fred said.

“Guess you really aren’t going for Hogwarts Prefect,” Harry said to Percy.

“Wasn’t,” he replied, “but she told me I’m probably going to be one anyway. After all, she did know that she made a Marauder one.”

“She hoped I might curb the others,” Remus said. “I failed miserably.”

“Miserably on purpose,” Sirius quipped.

“There was that.”

“So, she wants you to keep the twins in check?” Harry asked.

“Actually, not really,” Percy said. “She’s trying to ‘pack’ the Prefect ranks with Club Members to help keep it quiet.”

“At least until you ruin it for everyone, Harry,” Fred added.

“I wouldn’t do that!” Harry said in mock horror.

“I got my money on November,” George said. “Hate to lose it.”

“No promises.”



“Harry?” a voice called and he saw Hermione running over. “Harry? You promised!”

“What?”

“They’re starting the music and you promised!”

Harry blushed furiously.

“And just what did Harrykins promise our brilliant co-leader?” George asked.

“He promised he would dance with me.” Hermione said as she dragged a very red Harry away.

“Whipped,” Sirius chuckled.

“Speaking of which,” Remus replied, “shouldn’t you go and find your wife?”

Sirius shrugged. “Probably a good idea,” he said as he rose from the table.

“Double whipped,” Fred noted for the record.

“That reminds me,” Percy said getting up as well.

“Triple whipped that one,” George noted mainly for Remus’s benefit.



## CHAPTER FIFTY-FOUR: END OF THE BEGINNING

SATURDAY, JUNE 29th, 1991 – THE WATANABE SCHOOL OF MAGICAL STUDIES, KYOTO, JAPAN.

“Not again!” a girl’s voice said in exasperation. Harry and the others looked over and saw Hermione’s cousins approaching the patch of ground they had staked out near the Red Gate.

“More?” Erin McGonagall asked with a laugh in her voice, “or is this reception committee for last year’s barbarian hoard?”

“Oh, last year’s hoard shifted in yesterday,” Hermione said. “We decided we needed substantial reinforcements.”

“Substantial?”

“We’re more than doubling out numbers,” Clarice said.

“It’s not an invasion,” Lyle Donovan laughed, “it’s a bloody viral infection – the British Flu!”

“You three bent on world conquest or something?” his sister Stacy asked.

“Britain first,” Harry quipped. “Never bite off more than you can chew.”

“We’ll be forced into afternoon teas by summer end!” Steve McGonagall moaned.

“Never forget,” Clarice said, “you are still part of the Commonwealth. Your Head of State is the same as ours.”

“Elizabeth the Second,” Hermione added with fake solemnity, “by the Grace of God Queen of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Head of the Commonwealth and so on.”



“Right,” Lyle said, “just so you know, Manchester United sucks.”

“Hey!” Harry replied in mock protest as the cousins started to head to their dorms and the new British contingent began emerging from the Red Gate.

“Oh look!” a new voice said. The three turned and saw that Luna had joined them, “it’s Mr. Remus! You never said he was coming.”

Harry looked and sure enough, Remus Lupin had in fact emerged from the gate. He soon spotted their smaller group and headed in their direction.

“What are you doing here, Remus?” Harry asked in genuine surprise.

“Magical Minder,” Remus said. “Aside from Bob Granger, everyone else in the house has done it so I figured why not? Besides, the thought of Time Compression and a couple or more years where I can avoid a full moon was too tempting not to attempt.”

“Why didn’t you say anything?” Clarice asked.

“Didn’t get final approval ‘til last week,” Remus replied. “The school had to work around my furry problem, which was last week and will come again during Fifth Session, and I had to get approval from work. Would have told you at the dinner thing on Sunday, but you were busy.”

“I wasn’t all that busy,” Clarice said. “Unlike some, I did talk to people,” she added looking at her brother and Hermione who tried and failed not to blush.

“So that wasn’t you I saw dancing the night away with Neville Longbottom,” Remus said back.

“It was hardly dancing the night away!” Clarice protested, blushing herself. “I did take breaks!”



“One,” Remus said. “And don’t try and say otherwise. Sirius and I counted.”

“Busted,” Harry chuckled.

“Could say the same about you dear brother,” Clarice replied.

“’ Cept it wouldn’t work,” Hermione said.

“Why not?”

“’ Cause everyone already thinks they’re boyfriend and girlfriend,” Remus said before Hermione could respond.

“This is going to be a long summer,” Harry groaned. “Even Sirius wasn’t this bad right out of the gate.”

“That’s ‘cause Sophie keeps him on a short leash,” Remus chuckled. “Speaking of Sophie, have you told them yet, Clarice?”

“Told us what?” Hermione asked.

“Sirius and Sophie found out a little over a week ago,” Remus said. “She’s expecting.”

“Again?!”

“Now, come on,” Luna said. “Emily is almost a year old.”

“Yeah, but you’re parents...” Harry began.

“Are talking about it,” Luna said with a smile just before skipping away before anyone could formulate a witty reply.

SCHOOL DAY 149, THE WATANABE SCHOOL OF MAGICAL STUDIES, KYOTO, JAPAN.



Harry had not known there were certain advantages in being a "Senior Master's Candidate." Last summer, he had been primarily an Undergraduate. It was, without a doubt, the hardest summer he had to date. Going for a Mastery was not easy, but the time commitment for that first university degree made secondary school look like a vacation. However, that was now behind him. Had he no other responsibilities, this summer would be a holiday in comparison to the prior three.

But the Watanabe School did not promote idleness. Now that he was fully invested in post-graduate studies, he was expected to take on additional time consuming responsibilities. For one thing, he was expected to teach. He had two magical masteries and a degree in chemistry. As a result, he was teaching basic chemistry at the secondary school level, one class a week (which met three times per academic week) and was also teaching Potions at the Masters level. In that course, he had three apprentices including his friend Neville Longbottom.

On the one hand, he was probably just as busy as he always had been. Harry did not mind that in general, but much of his time was now spent helping others rather than immersed in study. Again, he did not mind that so much. It was actually kind of enjoyable and he did get something from it he had not had before. He had an office in one of the academic buildings. It was small, to be sure, but it was his and it was a good place to get things done when he was not in a lab or in classes.

But, he and his flat-mates were now also expected to take some role in monitoring all the students from his country. Mostly, this simply meant they spoke with the Minders about once a week and reviewed any reports from the professors. This was more a paper drill than anything. Or at least it had been. The first term exam results had been posted and now there was a problem. One of the new students was in serious danger of being asked to leave. That student excelled at any practical demonstrations, magical or non-magical, but could not seem to write an exam, or paper for that matter. A report identified the reason. The student was not "slow," quite the opposite. But reading was an issue. This was not just the case that as a Brit,



the student had no real formal education before coming to Japan. This student suffered from a learning disability.

The student needed help – a personal tutor. There was one who the school suggested would be a perfect fit, the proverbial square peg, square hole situation. Harry was now asked to try and make this work. But Harry knew he could not force or order the person to help. Without the help, the struggling student probably would not continue. It would be only one failure out of over nine-hundred students, he had been told. To Harry, however, one failure was one too many especially where the person could succeed with the right help.

There was a knock on the door to his office.

“Come in,” Harry said. The door opened and Ron Weasley walked in. “Have a seat.”

“Nice room,” Ron said. “How’d you get it.”

“Post-graduates get one,” Harry said. “It’s not much, but it is quiet.”

Ron nodded as he took a seat. “What’d you want to see me about, Harry? I know my marks aren’t brilliant but...”

“They’re not that bad, Ron. Your practical marks ... well, just between you and me you’re right up there giving your brothers and sister a run for their money. In maths and science, again excellent. On the reading and writing side...”

“I know,” Ron said. “That’s a problem.”

“You’re still doing well enough. Upper half and all.”

“It’s hard.”

“Which is why you’re here. I need to ask you a favor. I know you have a reading problem, Ron...”

Ron looked surprised. “How?”



“Obviously, I was told. Might have been your sister, can’t remember, but the school knows and because of the favor, they told me. You got help, right?”

Ron nodded. “Still isn’t easy. I’m told it’ll never be real easy. But yeah. Glad I did. You have no idea how worthless I felt before. I know I’m not dumb, but I couldn’t learn to read or write and everyone else could? I want to be good at something other than chess or quidditch. Don’t know what, but I did and do and yet...”

“Ron, you are doing quite well.”

“Thanks. You know the reading is easier if I really like what I’m reading about. It’s the stuff I don’t like as much that is still a pain.”

“What do you like reading?”

“Got loads of books on chess and quidditch,” Ron chuckled. “Mostly strategy and stuff. But I’m also interested in buildings and stuff so I got books on those too. Muggle books! Stuff about forts and castles and those huge churches they built without fancy machines and stuff. One of the non-magical professors suggested something ‘long those lines for an elective next Session. I’m doing pretty good in Japanese. Oddly, it’s easy to read for me. But I don’t know ‘bout other languages. So he says maybe their drafting course. Learn how to design things and survey and stuff. Sounds like fun, but that’s just me.”

“Sounds brilliant,” Harry said sincerely. “Of course, your ability to – er – overcome your problem is why you’re here.”

“Oh?”

“There’s another student in your year with your problem. Unlike you, they only recently discovered it.”

“Can’t imagine how hard this place would be had I not gotten help a few years ago,” Ron thought aloud.



“So you see my problem then? The student, like you, does quite well in the applied stuff but ...”

“Yeah,” Ron said understanding.

“I don’t want to have to send her home, Ron. Now she is getting help, but the school suggests a study partner – one who’s been through it before, one who understands what she is going through ...”

“She?”

“Is that a problem?”

“Er ... no, I suppose not. Not unless you want me to room with her. Honestly, sharing a flat with Ginny is a pain...”

“You won’t have to do that. Just help her. You know, study and all that? The two of you will be excused from the rule that requires you to do your own homework and such. The only thing you can’t help her with are the actual exams.”

“I don’t know,” Ron said. “Never done that before. What if I’m rubbish at it? Then again, Ginny didn’t know what she was doing and was a huge help. I thought she hated me, but ... But what if I can’t help?”

“Don’t sell yourself short, Ron. You were very good helping others with magic last year. I kept you with the First Years not because you were at their level but because you were a damn good instructor.”

“But that was magic. That’s different.”

“Ron, at my level I am expected to teach. I taught Chemistry and Potions last Term. One is magical, the other is not. You know what the difference is?”

“No.”



“From a teaching standpoint, nothing except the course material. It really isn’t all that different, teaching that is. I know you can with magic. All this is really is something else you know that she does not.”

“I don’t know...”

“Well, you can’t know that unless you try. Without help, I’m afraid she might have to leave. She’s been with the Club for three years. This is what she wants and ... it would destroy her.”

“Yeah.” Ron said. The tone indicated he could relate to that. “I’ll try, but no promises.”

“I understand, Ron.”

Several minutes later, Ron got up and left the office. His student was in a room just down the hall. Ron still was not sure if he could do this, but he had promised to try. He reached the door and opened it. Inside there was a table with several chairs around it. Only one was occupied and at this point all he saw was a head of long, light brown hair and all he hear was what could best be described as not so silent tears. She was clearly crying and Ron was not actually ready for that. Still, he made a promise. He took a seat across from her and thought to himself. He remembered what Ginny had told him over and over again.

“Think before you speak Ronald! It just makes things worse when you don’t!”

“Hello,” he said. The girl looked up and any doubt he might have had that she was crying was erased. Her eyes were red and puffy and there were clear indications that a flood of tears had fallen very recently.

Ron recognized her from the Club. He could not remember her name, just that she was a Third Year Club Member and her badges did not show that she was in school yet. Odd that, he thought, she looked bigger than most kids his age.



“So,” she practically spat, “they’re sending you home too, I suppose.”

“Er ... um ... why would they do that? Did they tell you that?”

“They said I might have to, means I probably will.” She seemed almost resigned to her perceived fate, much as Ron had been once.

“Might does not mean will,” Ron said.

“Does if you’re as dumb as a troll,” she almost whimpered.

“Someone tell you that?”

“No. But I know that’s what they meant.”

“Except, that’s not what they meant,” Ron said. “Least it’s not what they told me.”

“What?” she asked in disbelief.

“Harry told me you were really smart and that your practicals were extremely good. You just need help on other things.”

“And I suppose you’re the help?”

Ron nodded.

“Are they trying to be mean to me? I thought Harry was a friend.”

“What do you mean?”

“How can you possibly help me,” she said growing indignant.

“I don’t know,” he replied sharply, “maybe it’s ‘cause I’m the only person he knows who probably knows what’s wrong and what you’re going through and that someone like you can get through it?”



“What?”

“You can’t read too good, can you?”

“It’s ‘too well.’ Can’t read too well. And yeah. Try not at all in English.”

“See, smarter than me already,” Ron said. “It turns out, I have the same problem you do.”

“You do? So you might have to leave too?”

Ron shook his head. “It still isn’t easy, but I can deal with the problem and get okay marks. I had help. Had it before I even came here. They think with help, you can get through this and will not have to leave.”

“What do you think?” she asked with the first glimmer of hope Ron had seen since he entered the room from the girl.

“I want to think that you can.”

“You only want to?”

“I think you can. I just hope I can help.”

“Why? Why do you want to help me?”

“I don’t ... damn! Sorry! That’s not what I meant. What I mean is a lot of people helped me and I can never pay them back directly. I think by helping you, I can kind of do that.”

“What was that other bit?” The girl was too stunned to feel hurt yet.

“My stupid mouth. That’s one problem I still have. I say stuff before I think and it comes out all wrong.”



“Maybe I could help with that, to ... you know ... well in that way we'd kinda help each other.”

“Yeah,” Ron said. “I'm Ron Weasley, by the way.”

“Nice to meet you, Ron. I'm Millie Bulstrode.”

SCHOOL DAY 297, THE WATANABE SCHOOL OF MAGICAL STUDIES, KYOTO, JAPAN.

“Dear Mr. Potter:

“We are pleased to inform you that you have been accepted to Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry...”

Harry dropped the letter on the desk in his office. He thought of binning it, but decided that one day he might want it as some kind of souvenir. The letter from Aunt Minnie was more amusing. It turned out that the Wards on their house in London made it impossible for any of the Hogwarts owls to deliver the letters. Fortunately, with Clarice being a supposed “Muggle Born,” Minerva had simply stopped by for the obligatory visit. She handed their letters to Bob Granger who promptly signed the permission form as their Guardian and then posted the letters to Japan. They were one step closer to destroying Voldemort, Harry thought. A small step, but it was an important one.

His thought process was interrupted by a knock on the door.

“Come in,” he said.

The door opened and Ron Weasley entered with Millicent Bulstrode. They both looked nervous.

“Have a seat,” he said and they did. “I take it you haven't seen your end of Session marks yet?”

They both shook their heads. Harry could tell that Millicent was terrified. What amused him a little was first that she was holding Ron's hand and second he looked to be in pain.



“You can relax, Millicent. You passed all your courses.”

“Oh!” was all she could say, but a smile was soon on her face and she let go of Ron who shook it as if to get the blood moving again.

“You actually did fairly well,” Harry added handing them each their marks. They both looked them over and smiled first at each other and then at Harry.

“So I don’t have to go home?” Millicent asked.

“Not unless you want to,” Harry said.

“Does this mean Ron’s not going to help me anymore?” she asked nervously again.

“That’s really up to you,” Harry replied. “The school would prefer you continue the same study routine, but we can’t force you.”

“Brilliant!” Ron said. “You remember what I promised?” he added turning to Millicent.

“You mean?”

“Yep!” Ron beamed. “Be prepared to lose your first chess match!”

“I think you’re thinking about the wrong one, Ronald,” Millicent responded with a mischievous smile. “I never lose.”

“Well, neither do I.”

“We can call it a draw now...”

“More fun if it is one.”

“Agreed. Just don’t hate me when I win.”



“Same here.”

Without even asking, the two practically ran from the office. To the nearest chess board, most like, Harry thought. He then thought about what he had seen. He did not know Ron well, but he knew that the boy had few real friends. He was friendly enough and people liked him, but that was not the same as a really good friend. Harry knew how important that was and was glad to see that it appeared that Ron now had a close friend. He could not help but smile, however, when he realized that with Fred and George as older brothers, the fact that Ron's friend was a girl might prove – er – uncomfortable. Poor Percy had to put up with the teasing, and he had been seeing Penelope Clearwater since last summer.

SCHOOL DAY 851, THE WATANABE SCHOOL OF MAGICAL STUDIES, KYOTO, JAPAN.

“What are you looking at there, Harry,” Hermione asked. The three of them had just received their mail from home. It always arrived the day after their real day.

“Letter from Lord Black,” Harry said. “He's saying it's time.”

“Time?”

Harry handed Hermione the letter. She read slowly and as she did her eyes widened slightly. “Oh. This is ....”

“Yeah,” Harry agreed.

“I guess we should...”

Harry nodded.

“When?”

“Well, there's no real hurry for us,” Harry said. “No need to drop everything as we still have two and a half Sessions 'til we head back.”



“Any ideas?”

“End of this Session during the post exams break. No one will be stressing too much then.”

Hermione nodded in agreement.

SCHOOL DAY 901, THE WATANABE SCHOOL OF MAGICAL STUDIES, KYOTO, JAPAN.

In a large room within the British Dormitories, a group made mainly of students assembled. There were some adults with them, but not many. All of the adults present were magical minders of British Students. In addition to Harry and his four closest friends, the other students were: Justin Abbot and his two younger sisters, Susan Bones, Oliver Wood, Cedric Diggory, Dean Thomas, Jackson Trotter and the five Weasleys. The adults included Minerva McGonagall, Amos Diggory, Frank and Alice Longbottom, and Remus Lupin.

“Many of you are probably wondering what this little meeting is about,” Harry said. There were several nods. “Well, I am going to be a little indirect. Will the following people please rise? Justin Abbott, Cedric Diggory, Neville Longbottom, Dean Thomas, Jackson Trotter and Oliver Wood?”

The individuals stood. “These individuals and myself are the Heirs Apparent to an Ancient and Noble House. Mr. Diggory and Mr. Longbottom are Heads of two such Houses. The fathers of the Weasleys and Luna Lovegood are also Heads. Susan Bones is the daughter of such a line. What we will be telling you is just what that means. Sometime this month, my cousin Lord Black will be doing the same thing with all the other Ancient and Noble Houses.”

“Why?” a voice asked.

“The main reason is most of those lines forgot what it meant to be an Ancient and Noble House. As you may guess if you all know each other, the Houses are not necessarily Pureblood, rich, famous, or politically powerful or large.”



“Large?” “What do you mean?”

“Two examples,” Harry said. “First off, the Ancient and Noble House of Potter, of which I am de facto Head. It is wealthy, old, and has votes in the Wizengamot – although someone else holds those for now – but it is really small. It consists of my sister and me. That’s it. And we are Half-Bloods. Now the House of Weasley is not very wealthy and lost its votes on the Wizengamot a long, long time ago. It is Pureblood and huge. Five of the Head’s children are with us today and there are two others. Then there’s loads of cousins and such as well. The Head only recently became a major Department Head within the Ministry.

“These lines, the Ancient and Noble Lines, are passed down from father to oldest son. If there is no son, the line ends, even if the property remains in the greater family. In that regard, the title of Ancient and Noble House is among the more fragile inheritances in British Magical society and does not even mean the Heir Apparent will ever see a knut for it. But, as we shall show, they are probably among the most important lines in magical Britain. I’ll now let Hermione explain as she’s the one with the degrees in History and such.”

Hermione then stood. “Since before either magical or non-magical recorded history, and until the end of the twelfth century, the magicals in Britain did not rule at all. The various magical clans governed themselves and there was some form of assembly of magical clans, but they existed merely to arbitrate disputes between the magical clans when such arose. The right to govern vested in the non-magical ruler of the land where each clan lived. Each ruler was advised by a wizard or a council of wizards regarding magical affairs. On occasion such ruler, be it King or Chief or whatever, might be magical himself, but the magicals were ruled by said King or Chief without regard to magic.

“Now magical clans are not what the pureblood elites would want you to believe. Blood status meant nothing. A clan was any family of witches and wizards with at least fifty adults. For example, if a Muggle



Born wizard married a Muggle and had seven magical children, and if each of these children married Muggles and had six magical children, when the youngest grandchild became an adult, the Muggle Born could declare Clan status and the Clan rights would be recognized by all others even though they were, at best very Half-Blood. It usually did not happen that way and it was not uncommon for recognized clans to merge for economic, political and other advantage. Still, the point is that the notion of Pureblood held no meaning in reality.

“At the end of the twelfth century, the magical clans for a variety of reasons decided it was in their best interests to rule themselves. Their treatment at the hands of their muggle rulers varied, but by and large it was not in their general interest. At that time, there were many Muggle rulers in what is now Magical Britain. Ireland was a hodgepodge of kingdoms. Wales was a collection of Lords and clans and such. Scotland had a King, but really was ruled by the lesser nobility. England had a King as well and while he exercised power through his nobility, he was the one and only true authority. The magicals were less regionalist than their non-magical kin and decided to ally themselves with the most powerful Kingdom and ruler in the islands. That was King Richard the First of England, known to history as Richard the Lionheart.

“What the magicals wanted and received was home rule and freedom from muggle taxation and conscription. That meant they no longer wanted to be vassals to any muggle lord nor did they wish to be required to provide men for their armies or pay for them. The magicals also wanted some guarantee against persecutions from their non-magical neighbors. King Richard was not about to get nothing in return. That meant that the magicals were to keep the King's Peace within their community. They were to protect the King's non-magical realm from magical crimes against persons or property. Non-magical committing crimes against magicals were to be turned over the Crown for punishment. No wizard could demand tribute or impose any tax upon any Muggle for any reason without leave of the King. Most notably, the Clans would be loyal to the Crown from that day forward.



“That meant that the Clan Heads could not stand against the Crown in whatever the Crown desired. This included making war on any non-magical country. Richard wanted this because at least a few Clan Heads had openly opposed the Crusades. From here on out, no Clan Head had that right. Disloyalty to the Crown would not be enforced by any Court, rather by an Oath that bound the Clan Head and all who might one day succeed him for so long as a descendant of Richard’s ancestors sat upon the throne. Violation of the Oath, and the entire Clan would be stripped of their magic forever.”

There were more than a few gasps at that.

Hermione continued. “At first, aside from the fact that no wizard was required to march off on the Crusades or pay taxes, the Treaty between the Crown and Clans really had little effect. However, it might be argued it made Britain what it is today. About a hundred years later, a new King – Edward the First – decided he had had enough of the border wars with Scotland and Wales. Prior to the Treaty the wizards in those places would have been expected to defend their lands from the English invaders. Now, they did nothing or worse. In Wales, they sided with the English allowing Edward’s army to make short work of the land.

“In Scotland, they sat idly by as the English invaded. True, the Scots under Sir William Wallace did defeat the much larger English Army at Sterling Bridge, but that was entirely a matter of superior leadership and tactics and not magical support. There is some evidence to believe at least some Scottish wizards supported Edward’s next attempt, the one which saw Wallace defeated at Falkirk. However, that victory was due mostly to the Scottish nobility who decided not to support Wallace and only chose to let him know at the last moment by riding away when they were ordered to attack the English. The Scottish victory at Bannockburn under Robert the Bruce was again a magicless affair.

“Now when the Treaty was signed, there were three hundred Clan Heads, all forerunners of what we now call the Ancient and Noble Houses. All were invested into the English nobility at that time. Most forgot or abandoned those titles over time. There are today only



fourteen such lines left intact. However, those fourteen lines by law and by magic are still the Lord Protectors of magical Britain. Neither the Wizengamot nor the Ministry of Magic has legal authority to rule.”

“Hold on,” Percy said, “there were three hundred clans and three hundred seats or votes on the original Wizengamot. You’re saying they’re different?”

“The Wizengamot was founded by the Clan Heads shortly after the Treaty with King Richard to handle the day to day governance of the magical population. Many of the Clan Heads wanted little to do with such matters as the original Wizengamot handled all government functions, to include tax collection and all aspects of law enforcement. Being on it was practically a full time job and most Clan Heads had estates to run. What most did was appoint a member of their Clan to the Wizengamot. Some Heads did not, but they were the minority.”

“But if there are only fourteen ‘Clan Heads’ left, why are there still three hundred votes on the Wizengamot?” Percy asked. “Why are there sixty-five members?”

“The Magical Council set the basic rules for seating on the Wizengamot. Each member was appointed for life and their position was passed on per magical inheritance law upon their death. The Magical Council, as defined by the Treaty, was also a hereditary position, but its successors were defined by the then recognized inheritance laws of the Muggles. Membership on the Magical Council passed from father to oldest surviving son. If there was no son, that line ended insofar as the Treaty was concerned.

“However, inheritance on the Wizengamot was less restricted. It could go from father to oldest child, or to the father’s designated successor. Daughters who were members sometimes married sons who were members. The result was when they passed on, the oldest child took over both seats. Seats were also bartered and sold. In this manner, over the centuries, the three hundred became smaller and smaller. Entire lines were divested of their seats so that now only sixty-five are left, most of whom have no direct connection to the original members. Only five seats are directly related to the original



membership and, perhaps by sheer coincidence, they are five seats that were originally held by that Clan's Head: The Blacks, Bones, Longbottoms, Potters and Prewetts. Even as to those, right now Dumbledore, who is not descended from any Clan Head, holds the Potter and Prewett proxies.

“Originally, the Magical Council which sat only the Clan Heads had the authority to override any decisions of the Wizengamot or disband them altogether at their pleasure. The Ministry for Magic was formed by the Wizengamot in 1692 solely for the purpose of enforcing the laws passed in support of the International Statute of Secrecy. Said Ministry had no other Charter or authority and its establishment was never sanctioned by a vote of the Magical Council.”

“Are you saying the Wizengamot and Ministry are illegal?” Percy Weasley asked. “Now THAT’S a masterful prank!”

“Illegal?” Hermione replied, “not exactly. They lack a Charter from the true legal authority, the Crown. Under the notion of ‘Home Rule,’ which is what the magicals received from King Richard, the Ancient and Noble Houses could set up a governing body. But that body answered to the Heads of the Ancient and Noble Houses as they did to the Crown. The fact that this chain of authority has not been exercised in over five hundred years does not mean that it no longer exists or is of no relevance. So, the Wizengamot is legal, provided it is executing the will of the Heads and therefore, the will of the Crown. The Ministry, however, has no legal authority as it was never authorized by the Heads.”

“Bloody hell,” Percy said. “And the Ministry does far more than merely see to the enforcement of the Secrecy laws!”

“How so?” Oliver Wood asked. It was almost rhetorical.

“Noting in the International Statute of Secrecy authorizes any magical action against Muggles. It can be read as forbidding them altogether and yet the Ministry obliviates Muggles all the time.”

“Among its other crimes and misdemeanors,” Hermione said.



“Why is this important?” Cedric asked. “You plotting a revolution?”

“To understand the importance we need to look back at the last War. When the War began, there were sixteen known Ancient and Noble Houses. There were only twelve when it ended. Four of the Houses lost their magic: every witch and wizard, regardless of age became squibs instantly. Well, at least everyone in a house did. The four houses lost their magic at different times.”

“Their Heads committed treason?”

“That’s just it,” Hermione continued. “At the time, the wizards who were thought to be the Heads were either opposed to the Death Eaters or actively fighting against them. The other Houses certainly sat up and took notice, but it didn’t make sense.

“Except that the true Head of House is always the oldest son still alive when his father passes. The magic does not work like property rights. If a Head’s oldest son is born out of wedlock, that boy is the rightful Heir Apparent. Lord Black looked into this when the Time Chamber scandal broke. Each of those four families had an unknown Heir Apparent. Obviously, each of those Heirs Apparent became the Head and then committed treason. Lord Black identified them. Three were Death Eaters before their preceding Head of House died. All three families lost their magic the very day that man passed away. The fourth became an obliviator and on his first mission for the Ministry, he and his House lost their magic.”

“But why?” Frank Longbottom asked. “He wasn’t a Death Eater.”

“Obliviators use magic on Muggles,” Hermione said. “Using magic on Muggles without the Crown’s authority was one of the things the Treaty forbade and tasked the Clan Heads to prevent. As the Ministry has no such authority, it technically violates the treaty every time its Obliviators are sent out. A violation of the Treaty by such a Head is treason against the Crown, whether they knew it at the time or not.”



“So basically what does all this mean?” Frank asked. “I mean everyone knows that the Black family had more than a few Death Eaters among them, yet they didn’t lose their magic.”

“The Heads never committed treason,” Hermione replied. “The oath binds the Heads and by extension the Heirs Apparent. The rest of the ‘Clan’ is not so constrained. As I understand the Journals, no one really expected the Heads to be absolutely responsible for everyone else, only to rule a magical world that was not by its nature a threat to the Crown.”

“Journals? Surely you haven’t had access to the Longbottom Journals,” Frank began.

“And the Blacks and Potters,” Neville finished. “Surely you did not expect us to learn the ‘official’ history of magical Britain the Ministry expects us to believe. Those Journals are a far better recitation of the then current events than the Pureblood propaganda our youth are expected to learn. And it accurately describes the history of our government, wars and all. None of the nonsense that every decision was for the best, including the series of laws that effectively made both the Wizengamot and Ministry a full employment bureau for half-witted Purebloods from the ‘right’ families while those ‘lesser’ witches and wizards were all but relegated to shop keepers.

“The Wizengamot was supposed to represent the common interests of the Clans. Each Clan had a representative and that representative was expected to look out for his or her Clan. At that time, every witch or wizard – even the Muggle Borns – were affiliated with one Clan or another. Thus, they had direct access to a seat on the Wizengamot and that seat was supposed to protect its constituents. Well, at least the law abiding ones anyway. Is that what we have now?

“What we have now is a Wizengamot that protects the interest of the Wizengamot. As most of them are now Purebloods from the ‘Right Families,’ that means they protect Purebloods from becoming what they have always been: a minority. Through in a Ministry that basically does what the Wizengamot tells it to do, and over eighty percent of our population is there to be stepped on.



“I know you were a respected Auror, Dad, but I will not support that illegal government, assuming it can even be called a government.”

“Are you suggesting open revolt?” Amos Diggory asked, “treason against the Ministry?”

“You missed the point Sir,” Harry replied. “The Ministry cannot be betrayed because it has no legal authority to exist. However, I am forced to admit that fourteen families, even if empowered by law, cannot simply walk in and start handing out notices and expect those who believe they are in power to simply nod and go home to update their resumes. From a practical standpoint, that’s not going to happen.

“But that was not the point of this – er – lesson. The point should be obvious. As Heads of Ancient and Noble Houses or Heir Apparent, if we must choose between the Ministry of Magic and Her Majesty’s Government, there can be only one choice. By law and by magic, we cannot stand against Her Majesty. That is, of course, unless you want your family to become Muggles, which means you’d answer to Her Majesty’s Government anyway.”

“Do the Muggles know about this?” Amos asked.

“Some,” Harry said.

“And some always have,” Remus added. “The Crown never gave up its magical advisor. There’s a witch currently serving as part of Her Majesty’s Court. When the Parliament finally forced permanent concessions from the Crown following the ouster of Charles II, there have also been at least some magicals within the muggle government proper. Currently, the Prime Minister, Home Secretary, Defense Minister, Foreign Minister and a couple other cabinet offices have magical advisory offices. Likewise, the various intelligence agencies have offices dedicated to magical affairs. All told, well over two hundred witches and wizards, mostly Muggle Borns but not entirely, work for the British Government in the area of magical affairs.”



“Surely that violates the Statute of Secrecy,” Alice Longbottom started.

“What Statute of Secrecy?” Harry asked. It was clear he knew of the statute. Its existence was not being questioned.

“Are you saying it does not apply?” Alice asked. “I know they teach about it here.”

“They also teach us about magical oaths and contracts,” Harry said. “For example, if I entered into a magically binding contract with Hermione to be her best friend and later entered into another binding magical contract to ignore her, which one applies? You can’t honor one without violating the other, can you?”

“No,” Alice agreed. “But if the first contract was still valid, it could only be broken if you and Hermione agreed. Only then would the second contract apply.”

“Exactly.”

“Something like that happened then?”

Harry nodded. “The Treaty between the Clans and Richard the First was a Magical Contract enforceable against the signatories and all of their defined heirs. So long as an heir of a Clan remains and an heir of William and Matilda remains upon the throne or claimant to the throne, the Treaty remains. Now, the Statute of Secrecy is much later. It was signed some five hundred years later, to be exact. No Head of an Ancient and Noble House signed on behalf of Britain and there is no valid repudiation of the prior treaty by all then surviving members of the Magical Council and the Crown. Moreover, the Statute was never ratified by the Magical Council as required under the original Wizengamot Charter to make it permanent. Consequently, the Statute of Secrecy is subordinate to the Treaty with the Crown. Arguably, enforcement of many of the provisions is consistent with that Treaty as the magical signers vowed to keep the King’s peace within the magical realm and as between the magical and non-magical realms. But, that Statute cannot be enforced in any way in



contravention of the Treaty. The Magical Council was by that Treaty the Council of the King. Again, the actual day-to-day activities were delegated to designated wizard courtiers. Still, some degree of permanent magical advice to the Crown was required and to attempt to remove that advice and cooperation by any other artifice would be a violation of the Treaty by the magical realm.”

“And what happens if that old Treaty were violated?” Amos asked.

“Like any Treaty, it’s only truly violated when one side calls the other on it,” Hermione replied. “Even so, it would render the Treaty in Breach, which would revert everything to the way it was before the Treaty.”

“And that means?”

“The Muggle government would be restored to its former position as the government of all Britain. That means it would become our government.”

“And we’d have to pay their taxes which are quite steep,” Harry added.

“Has it been breached?” Amos asked.

“Not by the Muggles. They agreed not to rule us, tax us or force us to fight for them and they never have.”

“What about our side?”

“The surviving Clan Heads never have, obviously. But as to our government? Yes. It seems to be second nature to them. They fail to keep the King’s Peace, they impose taxes on Muggles, they condone the use of magic against Muggles...”

“Taxes?” Amos interrupted.



“The parents of all Muggle Born or Muggle Raised children pay more for just about everything than those who are magical. They pay a fee to convert Muggle money into Galleons and back again. The magicals do not. They pay sales fees on magical goods. Magicals do not. They pay higher tuition for their children to attend school. They pay more for goods and services. Admittedly, it’s not shockingly more. But it is a tax on Muggles.”

“In our world,” Amos began to argue.

“The treaty made no such distinction. Muggles cannot tax magicals and magicals cannot tax Muggles – period,” Hermione said. “My parents have a dental practice in London and in Diagon Alley. They pay taxes to both governments when the Treaty clearly states they may only be taxed by the Crown.”

“Have they called us on it?”

“They almost did,” Remus said. “During the last War, Her Majesty’s Government was less than amused with our Ministry and its lack of either a policy or backbone. The Ministry refused to take serious action for fear of messing up the Pureblood society it was built to protect. The Muggles could care less about that rubbish, especially since it was a bunch of society members that were out and about murdering their people.

“The Muggles did not call us on it for two reasons. First of all, until Bagnold became Minister, it seemed as if there was a new Minister every few months. It’s hard to enter into a dialogue with a government that changes that often. Second, with their own magicals, they learned how to deal with the situation. They became very good at dealing with Death Eaters. One of their raids bagged over fifty.”

“What became of them?”

“Who?”

“The Death Eaters the Muggles captured.”



“The Muggles never took prisoners. Every Death Eater who had the misfortune of encountering Her Majesty’s Government’s forces is dead. The Muggle Government does not like terrorists.”

“Bloody hell!” Amos said. “And that stopped because Bagnold ...”

“It stopped because the war ended. Bagnold refused to speak with the Muggles. Another month or two, and they would have intervened under the authority vested in the Crown for such a breach of the Treaty. Took them almost ten years to almost lose their temper with us. I would not count on them being that patient again. That and they learned a lot about how to deal with magic.”

“And the problem is,” Hermione said, “the magical government is either totally ignorant of the mess they created or unconcerned. They live under the false belief that the Muggles don’t know anything and that magic will protect them. That is a very dangerous assumption if things should ever return to the way they were during the War.”

“The magical government of Britain is our own worst enemy,” Harry added.

“And just what can we do about it?” Frank asked.

“Right now, all we can do about it is start to think about how to fix it. That was the task our ancestors left to us eight hundred years ago and one which has been ignored most of that time. We can no longer ignore our responsibilities. How to deal with them, though. That I cannot answer.

“Lord Black is telling the others pretty much the same thing. For now we think. One day, we may have to act. Hopefully by then we will know how and in what direction.”

FRIDAY, JULY 26th, 1991 – HOGWARTS SCHOOL OF WITCHCRAFT AND WIZARDRY, SCOTLAND, U.K.

“Ah Quinirus,” Albus said, “it’s good to see you again! How was your sabbatical?”



“F-f-fascinating H-headmaster,” the pale man in an odd turban replied.

“Good. Good. I assume you will be ready to teach Defense Against the Dark Arts come September?”

The man could only nod.

“Excellent. Well, the others have been told as well. I have been asked to guard a particularly rare and valuable artifact by a friend for a time. He’s particular that he feels best if it were kept here. Anyway, I’ve asked the others to help set up defenses so that the object can be as safe as anywhere.”

“I-I s-see. A-and what is it?”

“A nondescript jewel of immense magical value,” Dumbledore replied.

“Th-the S-s-stone y-you mentioned?”

“Indeed. Nicholas has set his sights on travel and fears it would not be safe on his person. For now it’s in one of the Hogwarts Vaults at Gringotts, but as you should know Nicholas cannot trust the Goblins. Lived through one too many Goblin wars, I should guess. It will be relocated here in due course. I was hoping you could provide me with some insight into suitable traps, within your area of expertise, of course.”

“O-of C-c-course, H-h-headm-master.”

TUESDAY, JULY 30th, 1991 – THE WATANABE SCHOOL OF MAGICAL STUDIES, KYOTO, JAPAN.

Harry looked at himself in the mirror in his room. He was wearing a white collared shirt and tie, but that was beneath his doctoral robes. It was black and was arguably the closest thing non-magicals wore to British style wizard robes. But while wizard robes only said “magical,”



these robes supposedly said “learned.” He didn’t feel that way. If he was, the problem he was thinking about would be solved.

Today was the end of summer. Over nine hundred young British witches and wizards would be receiving degrees and certificates of some kind. The youngest were only seven and still would be getting their O.W.L.s. The oldest included his cousin Jason Evans, now nineteen. He would be getting his Masters Degree and at least one additional Mastery.

The problem was security. It was hard enough last year, but this year might well prove impossible. Hogwarts alone would see loads of “overeducated” children arriving, including over half of the supposed First Years. All in all, Harry knew that at Hogwarts alone, there would be three “students” with Muggle Ph.D.s, one who finished her Masters, an additional twenty-one with their undergraduate degrees and another thirty-six who had finished Secondary School. These degrees did not concern him, it was the magical ones. Sixty students would enter Hogwarts having completed everything that school could possibly offer and then some. All had Defense Masteries. Seven had between one and three additional ones. Another thirty-five, including a little over half of the supposed “First Years” already had their O.W.L.s. That was almost a quarter of the entire school. There were an additional thirty-six who were too young for Hogwarts who also had their O.W.L.s.

“What’s the worst they can do?” Harry asked himself. “Send me home?” He was too young under their law for anything else. British magical law did not recognize “assimilated age.” In their eyes he was still a minor and minors got sent home. Thus, he decided this was a line of thinking for another day. Today, his friends and family would be there as he and hundreds of others got their degrees and magical certifications.

“You ready Harry?” a voice called.

Harry turned and saw Hermione standing in the door to his room. She was already in her robes and had obviously spent a lot of time on her hair, something she ordinarily did not do at all.



“You look pretty,” he said softly.

“Oh hush! These robes are ghastly!”

“Still...” Harry liked it when she blushed.

“You okay Harry?”

“Just thinking. This really shouldn’t be necessary, you know?”

“What shouldn’t?”

“The lot of us having to go half way around the world just to have any hope of a decent education,” Harry said. “It shouldn’t have to be that way.”

Hermione nodded. “No, it shouldn’t. For now, however ...”

“Yeah. One day, maybe.”

“Is that your big plan?” Hermione said almost joking.

“Maybe.”

“Well, it’s a good one. But we both know a lot has to happen before it can become reality.”

Harry nodded. “In a way, this is the end, you know.”

Hermione nodded. “End of one adventure. We’ll never be students again, at least not all the time students.”

Harry nodded.

“But another adventure awaits,” Hermione said. “Come on. It’s almost time.”



Harry turned and took his best friend's hand and they left their "childhood" behind.

## POST-SCRIPT

(as opposed to Epilogue)

Ronald Bilius Weasley, youngest son of the Head of the Ancient and Noble House of Weasley, was born March 1st, 1980 at St. Mungo's in London and lived outside of Ottery St. Catchpole, Devon. On July 30th 1991, aged eleven by the calendar and fifteen by the number of days, he completed his first summer at the Watanabe School and received the results of his O.W.L.s. His lowest mark was an Exceeds Expectations, which considering that is what he received on every written portion of his exams, exceeded his own. His practicals were Outstandings. In his non-magical subjects, he had also done better than he expected and was doing really well in maths and sciences.

Millicent Agnes Bulstrode was born April 15th, 1980 in London where she was raised. She was also aged eleven and fifteen on July 30th, 1991 when she finished her first summer in Japan. Her marks, it was later remarked, were almost identical to that of her friend and mentor Ron Weasley and she would be returning with him the next summer.

Luna Celeste Lovegood, the oldest daughter of the Head of the Ancient and Noble House of Lovegood and Magical Heir of Helga Hufflepuff, was born September 21st, 1980 outside of Ottery St. Catchpole, Devon, where she lived with her parents. On July 30th, 1991, she was aged ten and twenty-three having completed three summers in Japan. That day, she received her degrees in Journalism and Biology. In addition to the Combat Defense Mastery she received the year before, she picked up her Mastery in Magical Zoology and was now working towards a Mastery in Spell Crafting and an advanced business degree. She planned to return for one final summer.

Neville Longbottom, Heir Apparent to the Ancient and Noble House of Longbottom celebrated the eleventh anniversary of his birth on July 30th, 1991. He had seen over twenty-three years of life as well. On that day, he completed his third summer in Japan by receiving his degree in Botany. He had really applied himself in his magical studies



and added to his Defense Mastery from the year before with a Mastery in both Potions and Herbology. He would return the next summer to pursue advanced degrees in Agronomy and at least one more Mastery. While undecided, he was leaning towards Transfiguration.

Clarice Lillian Jameson was born on July 12th 1981 in Godric's Hollow, U.K., the younger sister of Harry Potter. On July 30th, 1991, she completed her formal education in Japan aged ten and twenty-six. She received her Ph.D. in Economics, much to the surprise of many who wondered what that degree had to do with her real passion. In addition to her Basic Healing and Defense Masteries, she picked up her Charms Mastery and an advanced Healer Mastery in what Muggles would call Obstetrics, Gynecology and Pediatric Medicine. Her days as a full time student were at an end.

Hermione Jane Granger, magical Heir of Rowena Ravenclaw, was born on September 19th, 1979 in Loughton, Essex, U.K. and now lived in London. On July 30th, 1991, she was eleven and twenty-eight years of age and also had completed her fourth summer in Japan. She earned her Ph.D. in Political Science with a dissertation that was a scathing critique of the Magical British government. She completed her Mastery in Spell Crafting to go along with her previous Masteries in Defense and Transfiguration.

Harry James Potter, magical heir of both Godric Gryffindor and Salazar Slytherin would become Head of the Ancient and Noble House of Potter the next day. On this July 30th, 1991, he was almost eleven and was twenty-seven years old. He finished his fourth summer by earning his Ph.D. in Chemistry where he had written a dissertation on the Chemistry of Potions which his advisor recommended he expand upon into a book on the topic. He was still debating that point. He would leave Japan with Masteries in Defense, Potions, Curse Breaking and Warding.

A/N: "End of the Beginning" ... "This is not the end. It is not even the beginning of the end. But, perhaps, it is the end of the beginning." Prime Minister Winston Churchill following the victory of the British 8th Army over the Germans at El Alamein, 1942.



I would like to thank the hundreds who have taken the time to review this to date as well as all of you (hundreds, maybe even more) who have had alerts on the story. I cannot say for certain how many there have been, but I have had no less than thirty a day since I posted the first chapter. I appreciate your support.

I hope to begin posting Part II soon. (I also hope to finish my other story as well...)

While the full title to Part II remains undecided at this time, it will begin: "30 Minutes II:" so those of you eager for Hogwarts can find it... (Leaning towards "The Gathering Storm.")